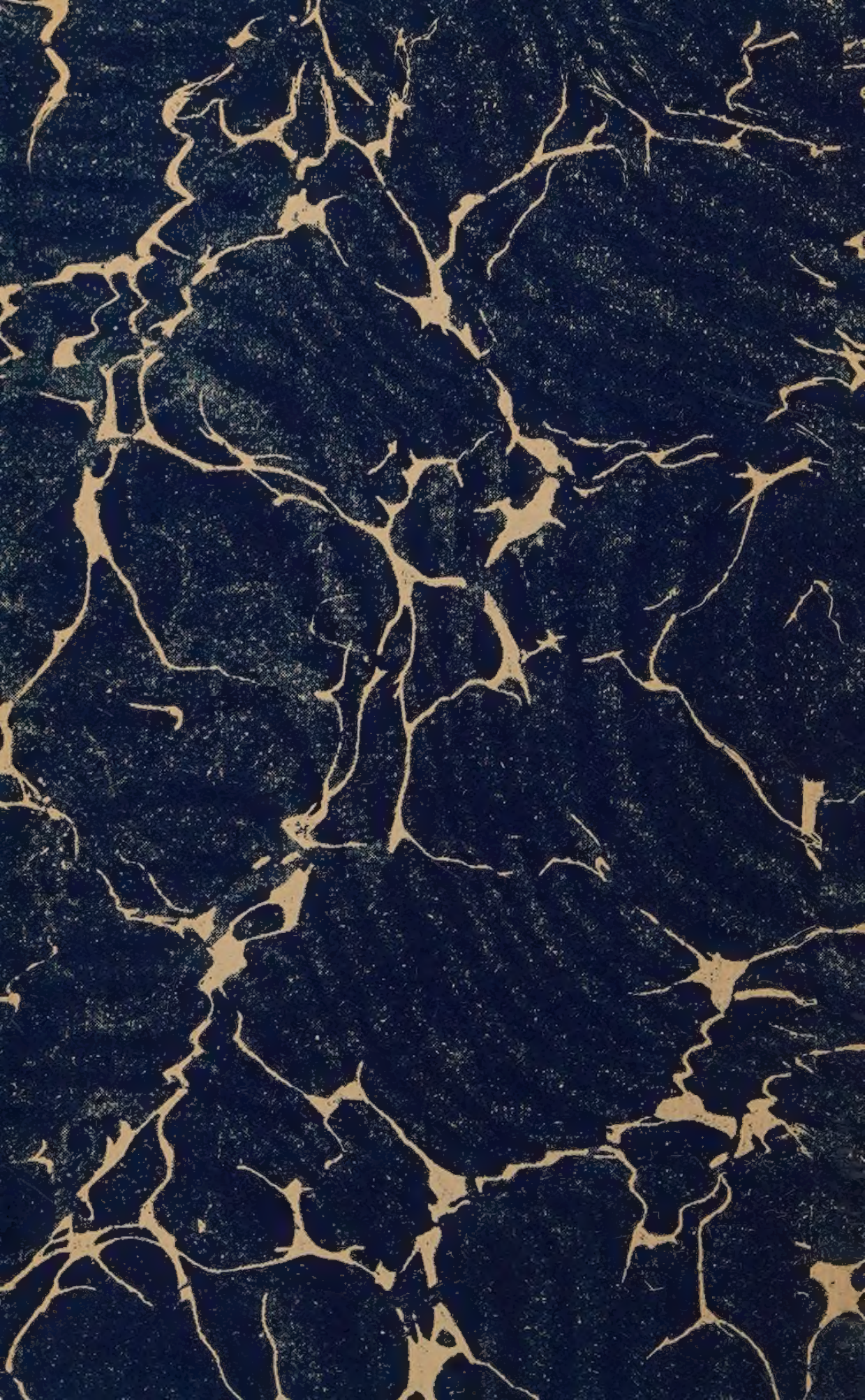
Jesus Crucified

by

Fr. Marie Fr. Grou S.J.



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JESUS CRUCIFIED

JESUS CRUCIFIED

OR

THE SCIENCE OF THE CROSS

IN THE FORM OF MEDITATIONS

BY

FF. PIERRE MARIE & JEAN NICOLAS GROU

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

EDITED BY

ALPHONSE CADRES, S.J.

TRANSLATED BY L. M. LEGGATT

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

JEAN NICOLAS GROU was born at Calais on November 3, 1731, and at fifteen entered the Order founded by Saint Ignatius. He had just finished his course of teaching and his theological studies, when he made the excellent translation from Plato which gave him an assured position among writers of the period. The decree suppressing the Society of Jesus having forced him to take refuge in Lorraine, he made his final vows at Pont-à-Mousson in either 1765 or 1766. Later on different circumstances, amongst others a second decree of proscription, took him to Holland, and afforded him leisure to continue his work on the Greek philosopher. A few years after, having returned to Paris, on the invitation of Monsieur de Beaumont, he was made director of a religious community. In 1792 Providence brought about his journey to England, where his talents and his steadfast virtues gained him the esteem and respect of all who knew him, until his life's end. He died in 1803, at Lulworth Castle, where he was living with the Weld family, who had shown him the most open-handed hospitality.

Father Grou had the joy of renewing his four professed vows at Lulworth during the May of that year, at the time when Father William Strickland, in virtue of the powers conferred by Pius VII. on Father Grüber, General of the Society of Jesus, appointed Father Marmaduke Stone Superior of all the English Jesuits, with permission to live under the rule of Saint Ignatius, thus uniting this new province to all the other branches of the same Order in Russia.*

The following epitaph is engraved on Father Grou's tomb:

HIC SITUS EST

JOHANNES NICOLAUS GROVIUS,

SACERDOS,

PIETATIS CULTOR ASSIDUUS,
OB CATHOLICAM PROFESSIONEM
ACTUS IN EXILIUM, HUNC IN AMPLEXU
CRUCIS DEFUNCTUM INTER SUOS CONDIDIT
THOMAS WELD, PIETATIS
CAUSA, VIXIT ANNOS LXXII.,
VETERIS INSTITUTI, QUOD
IN SOCIETATE JESU
CEPERAT, UNICE
AMANS
DECESSIT IDIBUS DECEMBR
M.DCCC. III.
R. I. P.

---

* Father M. Stone was professed and made Provincial on May 22, 1803. But we are unable to give the exact date when Father Grou had the consolation of renewing his vows.

Père Grou spent his last years in France far from the tumult of the world, dividing his time between study, parish work, and the endeavour after perfection. He devoted all his spare time to writing on devotional subjects. To this pronounced taste for solitude and work we owe the various valuable writings he published before leaving Paris. There appeared in succession, during seven or eight years (between 1783 and 1790): *La Morale tirée des Confessions de Saint Augustin, Les Caractères de la vraie Dévotion, Les Maximes spirituelles, La Science du Crucifix,* and *La Science pratique du Crucifix.* These do not include his writings published in England—*i.e., Méditations en Forme de Retraite sur l'Amour de Dieu, Le Chrétien sanctifié par l'Oraison Dominicale, L'Intérieur de Jésus et de Marie,* and several others we shall mention later. All these books, inspired by ardent zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls, have already borne abundant fruit, and we feel sure they are still read with great profit by all Christians striving after perfection. Those who have taken the trouble to read the notice on Father Grou* will no doubt remember that the present volume, apparently one of the

* This notice, placed at the beginning of *L'Intérieur de Jésus et de Marie,* gives all the details which could be wished, on the life and works of the author.

Œuvres spirituelles of the author, is not, strictly speaking, written by him. He merely brought it out in a new edition after sundry alterations in style, required by good taste. The real author is Father Marie, S.J.*

This good religious, at the express wish of the Queen-Mother, Marie de Medicis, wrote it for the edification of that Princess and all those of her Court. The aim of the book is to make us realize, in a series of meditations, that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Way that we should go, by imitating His examples; the Truth which enlightens us by studying the maxims of His Gospel; the Life which sustains, animates, and sanctifies us, by our participation in His infinite merits, and especially by the receiving of His body and blood.

The author would have us let these truths sink deeply into our hearts, both during the days of our earthly pilgrimage and when we are about to leave this world for eternity. In a word, he wishes us to follow Saint Paul's example, and put all our happiness and all our merit in knowing only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, during our whole life, and at the approach of death.

* Father Marie was born in Rome in 1580, entered the Society of Jesus in 1616, and died at Bourges in 1645, having spent his whole life in preaching. In addition to the volume we are here reprinting, Father Marie brought out another.

This book appeared for the first time in 1642, under the following title, which expresses clearly the author's twofold aim: *Science du Crucifix en forme de Méditations. Divisée en deux parties: La première, pour le temps de la vie; La seconde, pour l'heure de la mort.* Several editions came out after the author's death, the first in 1654, the second in 1666. The book had been out of print and practically forgotten for nearly two hundred years, when Father Grou so much admired the sound doctrine of his fellow-priest in these short Meditations that he would not deprive the faithful of the wholesome teaching contained therein. This induced him to have it reprinted, after slightly revising the style, which had become too obsolete, not only to attract the reader, but to be of real use.

The revised edition was first published by Didot in 1783, under the name of Father Marie and the initials of Father Grou. On the title-page—an unusual thing at the time—the author is described as Reverend Father; while in his other devotional works he is only called "Monsieur l'Abbé." The book in its altered form was several times reprinted; we know of six editions including the present.

Although *La Science du Crucifix* is not from the pen of Father Grou, yet, considering how much he admired the book and the pains

he took in revising and correcting it, afterwards himself writing a volume intended to complete it,* we thought that to overlook the latter would be to defraud the public, and that a good edition was sure of a favourable reception. We give it as it left Father Grou's hands, with the exception of a few expressions we thought it advisable to change, as they would not, at the present day, have seemed as clear and precise as could be wished. Furthermore, on serious consideration, we decided to make a slight alteration in the title. The original formula adopted by the author has been preserved literally; but it will be preceded henceforward by a few words which we have ventured to add, in order to give the reader a clearer idea of the subject of the book, as well as to prevent confusion with several others under exactly the same name. As in many places the thoughts suggested for our meditation are, so to speak, a tissue of words from Holy Scripture, we have thought we could materially assist the reader by carefully quoting the texts which have inspired the author: thus the truths he develops with so much unction will acquire new force and authority. Furthermore, in the interest of devout souls, we have added an Appendix of Devotions suitable to the contents of the

* Entitled *La Science pratique du Crucifix*, of which a new edition was brought out in 1863.

book. Responding to the first part will be found a Method of Assisting at Holy Mass, and another for the Stations of the Cross; while the second part is completed by a few thoughts and practices suggested to the faithful as a preparation for death.

It only remains to beg Our Lord to give His blessing to this humble work and inspire all those who read it with a love of the Christian virtues. May our readers devote themselves wholeheartedly to the service of God, Who suffered and died on the Cross, so that after being crucified with Him, as Saint Paul says, they may deserve to rise again and reign with Him in Heaven for all eternity.

ALPHONSE CADRÈS, S.J.

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PART I

DURING LIFE

JESUS CRUCIFIED

FIRST MEDITATION.

WE SHOULD SUBMIT TO GOD, FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

CONSIDER, my soul, how great is the Majesty of God since it was necessary, in order that He might receive the homage due to Him, that a God-Man, His only Son, should be humbled before Him and should become "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross"! (Phil. ii. 8). Wonderful obedience, though bloody and terrible! In the death of His Son, God showed forth His sovereign power. He proclaimed His authority and was worthily glorified. To render due homage to the sovereign power of God nothing less would suffice than the obedience and humiliation of God-made-Man.

II.

After such a great example, who would dare resist God? Shall earth-worms, such

as we, dare to rebel against the yoke of obedience beneath which Jesus Christ bowed Himself and died ?

III.

Consider, my soul, your Saviour, hanging on the Cross. That was the end of all His obedience. It was only after doing His Father's Will all the days of His life that He died and consummated His sacrifice. Can you refuse to submit to God, and obey His Will only when it does not clash with your own inclinations ?

IV.

Consider especially with what love, what zeal, what respect, Jesus Christ obeyed—" I do always the things that please Him . . ." (John viii. 29). He says Himself: " My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me . . ." (John iv. 34); " Father . . . yet not My will but Thine be done . . ." (Luke xx. 42). The only consolation He seemed to feel when on the Cross was at the point of death, when, remembering that He had fulfilled the whole Will of His Father, He exclaimed, with an energy all-divine, " It is consummated !" (John xix. 30). What do the words of Saint Paul mean, O my soul: " He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the

Cross . . ."? (Phil. ii. 8). What is the meaning of Jesus Christ's own words, spoken in all the agony of His bloody sweat: "*Father, not My will, but Thine be done*"? Jesus Christ comprehended the infinite greatness and majesty of God. He knew that nothing can be more just or more reasonable than submission to Him; and though, as His only Son, He was the equal of God, Our Lord willed to add to His great merits that of being God's servant, glorying and rejoicing in dying by God's command. Let us imitate this glorious example, who by nature are the slaves of God, and His children only by His grace. We owe Him absolute submission because He is our sovereign Lord, we owe it to Him because He is our Father; and in submitting to His commands, we are paying Him the homage of our obedience as well as showing Him our love.

SECOND MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US THE TERRIBLE VENGEANCE GOD EXACTS FROM SIN.

I.

It was the sins of men which nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross. The Jews were only the instruments of Divine Justice. He had taken upon Himself the sins of the whole world, and God, forgetting, we might almost say, that He was His beloved Son, poured upon His head all the penalties of Divine Justice. He gave Him up to death. "For the wickedness of My people have I struck Him . . ." (Isa. liii. 7, 8). He had to bear their sins and expiate them on the Cross. If Jesus Christ, in order to expiate sins He had not committed, found no mercy in His own Father, what is to become of real sinners if, by an unrepentant death, they fall into the hands of God? "For if," as Our Saviour Himself says, "in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31).

II.

The slightest pain, the least humiliation, would have been of infinite merit in the Son of God. Yet to expiate our sins He had to undergo every kind of pain and opprobrium, He had to drink the chalice of Divine wrath to the dregs. Where, then, is a wretched mortal, guilty before God, to find pains and torments infinite enough to atone for the infinite grievousness of his offences ?

III.

The atonement of a mortal, guilty in the sight of God, being limited and out of proportion to His infinite majesty, Divine Justice will exact infinite reparation for all eternity. This dread justice must be as infinite as the Divine mercy, which we feel in the infinite merits of the Son of God. Divine justice must be infinite because its punishments will be without end. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God . . ." (Heb. x. 31).

IV.

Calvary is the scene where we contemplate these great truths. There we behold the infinite justice of God in the terrible vengeance He exacts of His own Son. There we

behold His infinite mercy in the acceptation of His Son's life as the expiation of our sins. If we are not washed in the Precious Blood of Our Saviour so as to become the objects of His mercy, we must expect to be the objects of His justice, which, at any rate in duration, will be infinitely rigorous.

THIRD MEDITATION.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

I.

"For if when we were enemies," says Saint Paul, "we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life? . . ." (Rom. v. 8). What do these words mean? That the offence against God by sin, being infinite, can only be atoned for by the merits of God-made-Man; that the Son of God had to be humiliated in order that God might receive the glory of which sin had robbed Him; and that He had to die in the most terrible torments to redeem sinful man from eternal death.

II.

Alas! we know not what we do when we offend against the infinite mercy of God. So great is His goodness that He would not allow us to suffer at all, if Justice did not force His hand. How terrible must Divine Justice be, since to reconcile it with His

Goodness, God willed that His Son should be pierced and wounded, and should die on the Cross to reconcile us to Himself . . . (Rom. viii. 32).

III.

The green wood has been consumed by the fire of Divine anger—"what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31). When God punishes the sinner as he deserves, nothing can stop or lessen His anger. He allowed it to fall upon His own Son, because Our Lord was willing to take upon Himself the sins of men. What will become of those unrepentant sinners who have no part in the expiation of Our Saviour? Nothing less than eternal suffering can atone for their sins. How terrible is sin when we reflect upon its consequences!

FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX GIVES US AN IDEA OF THE GLORY AND HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

I.

WHAT is the happiness God prepares for His elect in Heaven? "Eye hath not seen," says Saint Paul, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him . . ." (1 Cor. ii. 9). We can judge of that happiness by what it cost the Saviour of the world to obtain it for us. He suffered humiliation and death; He shed all His blood to snatch us from Hell, and give us a certain hope of happiness in Heaven. What must that happiness be which can only be measured by such infinite merits!

II.

We can judge of the happiness of Heaven by the fervent prayer of Jesus Christ before His bloody sacrifice, offered to His Father to gain it for us. "Holy Father," He prayed, "keep them in My name, whom

Thou hast given Me; . . . and not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me. . . . Those whom Thou gavest Me I have kept. . . . I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me . . .'' (John xvii. 11, 12, 15, 20, 24). That is why I submit to the rigour of Thy Justice, that is why I am about to die upon the Cross and consummate My sacrifice. . . . Oh, what must be the happiness of Heaven, to be bought at so great a price!

III.

If we listened to our own feeble reasoning, we should hardly be able to believe that the happiness of Heaven, which is the enjoyment of God Himself, is prepared for vile creatures, sinners soiled with every crime. I look upon the Crucifix, and there I behold a mystery more boundless still, the Son of God given up to humiliation and death for the salvation of sinners. God's mercy and goodness to me shine out more from the Cross than in Heaven itself. If you tell me that it is too much presumption in a vile creature and miserable sinner to hope to behold God face to face, united to Him in the bonds of eternal love, and participating in His happiness and glory, I answer that God did something still more wonderful for me when He

willed that His Son should assume my nature, become man as I am, bear my sins, and wash them out in His blood. Cross of my Saviour, you strengthen my faith, you confirm my hopes, you cause my heart to burn within me, you are the pledge of the heavenly happiness prepared for me!

IV.

Since the redemption of the human race by Jesus Christ, the munificence of God seems boundless. He grants the happiness of Heaven to those who have visited prisoners and captives, consoled the afflicted, and clothed the naked (Matt. xxv. 34-40); He grants it even to those who have given a cup of cold water in His Name (Matt. x. 42). "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation," says Saint Paul, "worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). For Jesus Christ, by immolating Himself for us, merited Heaven and eternal glory, and if we are united to Him by grace, He gives Divine merit to the least of our works. Heaven is too great a reward for me, but not for Him. All that it holds for me of glory, exaltation, and happiness does not come up to His infinite merits. I participate, as one of His members, in His Merits: why should I not have a

part in the heavenly joys He gained that He might share them with all His members?

V.

"I go," said Jesus Christ to His Apostles, "to prepare a place for you . . ." (John xiv. 2); "I will take you to Myself" (John xiv. 3). You shall share my glory and happiness. Having become by adoption the Divine children of God and brothers of Jesus Christ, we are, says Saint Paul, "heirs indeed and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). If as the Firstborn He has entered into possession of Heaven, have we not the right to enter there ourselves as His members and co-heirs? Christians, great and glorious is your destiny, if you suffer nothing to separate you from your Head! Pity poor infidels! They are strangers to Jesus Christ, they have no share in His Merits; and the hope of a better world does not compensate them, as it does us, for the sorrows of this. What are all the ills of this world to the faithful Christian who has always the hope of heavenly joys before him? Amidst privations he enjoys the riches of grace; amidst hindrances and tribulation he knows the delights of peace; and the hope of a speedy entrance into the joy of his Lord gives him, even in the land of his exile, a foretaste of the ineffable happiness God has

prepared for him. I suffer, he says with Job, but not without consolation. "In my flesh" (wherein my soul is subject to many infirmities and troubles) "I shall see" my Saviour and "my God" (Job xix. 26).

VI.

Foolish Christians, more to be pitied even than infidels, for the sake of frivolous amusements, fleeting joys, and shameless pleasures, and to satisfy passions which keep you in slavery and break your hearts, you would forfeit the heritage of the sons of God! Alas! it is already yours: Jesus Christ gained it for you at the price of His blood. It is not even a question of your deserving it, you are only asked not to be unworthy of it, and yet you allow it to be taken from you and given to others!

FIFTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US THE EXCELLENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

I.

My soul, if you would no longer be deceived by the false views of the world on the practice of the Christian virtues, and would know the excellence of patience and charity, which worldlings hold but lightly, cast your eyes on Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross. That is His school, it is there He urges His disciples with Divine eloquence to strive after Christian perfection. There He preaches patience: a thief crucified beside Him was the first to learn His lessons, to be converted and saved. There He preaches humility, by allowing Himself to be "filled with reproaches" (Lam. iii. 30); and while He is dying the death of the basest and vilest of men, the sun, losing his light, and the earth, quaking in awe, render solemn testimony to His greatness and His innocence. There He preaches meekness and love; He offers the shelter of His heart and His

pierced side to His murderers, He opens His mouth only to pray for them; and this spectacle melts and converts these barbarians: they recognize Him; "they return striking their breasts . . ." "and confessing openly that this is indeed the Son of God . . ." (Matt. xxvii. 54; Luke xxiii. 34, 45, 48).

II.

Behold, my soul, how powerfully Jesus Christ on the Cross urges you to poverty, mortification, and detachment. He was denuded of everything; He had not even a garment wherewith to cover His nakedness. He sees before Him only objects of distress: a Mother whose heart is pierced by the sword of sorrow; one solitary disciple, the sight of whom recalls the treachery and neglect of all the rest; furious enemies who pierce Him and rejoice in His agonies, adding insult and blasphemy to cruelty. His Father seems to have forsaken Him. The Victim denies Himself all consolation, until He sees the fulfilment of His destiny and the consummation of His sacrifice.

III.

Jesus Christ has not taught us the practice only of virtue. By practising Himself what He teaches, He has obtained for us the grace to fulfil it, and to imitate Him by becoming

humble, patient, and charitable. To make us capable of acts above our natural powers, His blood had to flow from His veins into our hearts, His spirit and His life had to be communicated to us. Our Saviour and Master is also the author of all sanctity. Our virtues are the result of His sacrifice on the Cross; they owe eternal homage to His wounds; they must drink of His blood to live.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF VIRTUE AND THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

I.

God dispenses with lavish hand all perishable and temporal benefits, such as health, pleasures, riches, and honours. His providence wills that the most unworthy may enjoy them, and men who do not see below the surface of His judgments take these things to be the indiscriminate favours of fortune. But they are too gross and of too little value in the sight of Divine Wisdom for them to be very difficult of attainment. Not so the treasures of grace, those supernatural means of help, those heavenly promptings, and those virtues which make men resemble God. God willed that the blood of His Son should be the price of them, and that they should be communicated to those only who are united to Him as members to their Head. What, then, should be the grandeur and the dignity of Christian acts

which draw all their merits from Jesus Christ, and become, so to speak, Divine in Him !

II.

Jesus Christ is the trunk of a great tree; Christians are its branches. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself if it be not joined to the trunk; thus we can do nothing towards our own salvation, nothing deserving of the rewards of Heaven, unless we be united to our Divine Head. "I am the Vine," says Jesus Christ to His disciples, "you the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. . . ." "If any one abide not in Me he shall be cast forth as a branch that shall wither . . . and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth . . ." (John xv. 5, 6). Thus we can have no virtues and no merits which do not flow from the heart of Jesus Christ with His Precious Blood. To be meek and humble as He was, to be charitable, patient, mortified, we must be clothed with His spirit and transformed into His likeness, and as in a state of grace it is not we who live but He Who liveth in us, works done in this state are His rather than ours.

III.

This is what made Saint Paul say: "For you are dead" (to the things of this world)

"and your life is hid with Christ in God" (St. Paul, Col. iii. 3). In other words, the life we get from Jesus Christ, that supernatural life of charity, patience, and humility, is entirely interior and veiled from the eyes of men. It is "hid in God," because it detaches us from creatures, the better to invite and attach us to God only. It is "hid with Christ," because the life comes from Him, and because from the Cross comes the only vigour and energy we have; it is breathed into us by our Head, and it works secretly within us to enable us to make acts like His.

IV.

This precious truth is even more apparent in the adorable Sacrament which Jesus Christ instituted to unite the members with their Head. "I am the bread of life," says Jesus Christ, "he that cometh to Me shall not hunger . . . if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, for the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world . . ." (John vi. 33, 59); "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 52); "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him" (John vi. 57). We live in Him and He in us, by an intimate bond of feeling, charity, and reciprocal love. "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father; so he

that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). We shall be one on earth, and that will be the beginning of our union for all eternity. Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of His love, is therefore to our souls what material food is to our bodies, with this difference: earthly food becomes merged in us, but Jesus Christ transforms us into Himself. He is more than our food, He is the life of our souls, He is the principle of everything that we do which is pleasing to God, and actions performed in such holy union are even more His than ours. All the good we do is His. If we are humble and charitable, chaste and patient, it is He, our Head, Who is chaste, patient, humble, and charitable in us. O dignity of Christianity, which raises poor humanity to such heights, and sets so great a price upon works which the wise of this world do not think worthy their notice!

V.

Since all the actions of the living members of Jesus Christ are due to Him as their Head, and gain all their merit from Him, we need not be surprised that God should promise an eternal reward even to those which, in themselves, are unimportant. What is the gift of a glass of water? If anyone gives it as a living member of Jesus Christ, it is

Our Lord Himself Who gives it; it is He Who suffers, humbles Himself and obeys, in the person of His members, and His merits will be the standard and proportion of their reward. Is it surprising that the angels of God should watch all the actions and undertakings of a Christian, as we are told an angel counted the steps of a hermit who, out of mortification, went to draw water from a well? Is not Saint Paul right when he tells us to glorify God in our most trifling actions? "Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). It is Jesus Christ Who ennobles our most insignificant actions, and they share in the merits of the Precious Blood which He shed for us.

VI.

Therefore the Cross of Jesus Christ, whence flow the merits of all we do, should be the standard of our actions. Men value riches and earthly goods; yet they are but a mass of corruption which will soon crumble into the dust from whence it came. They admire the achievements of earthly heroes, the prodigies of human valour, wisdom, and greatness; yet none of these have their sequel in the next world, and all these wonderful deeds, dead in the sight of God, lie buried in the grave of those who performed

them. Whereas the most insignificant actions which Jesus Christ cultivates in us and waters with His blood, the most humble of Christian virtues, are immortal and will survive the course of Time; they will emerge from the ruins of past centuries, where men thought them for ever buried, to receive an eternal reward at the hands of God. Then will those humble Christians who have shared the mortifications of their Master, who have been poor, and of no account in the eyes of the world, be covered with glory, and full of joy will enter the heritage of the sons of God.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

CHRISTIAN DIGNITY.

I.

ALAS! our blindness is deplorable! We glory in the passing advantages this world procures us, we boast of vain titles of nobility which are ours according to the flesh, yet we do not realize the dignity to which we have been raised as Christians and members of Jesus Christ. By virtue of His Cross we have become, as Saint Peter tells us, "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a purchased people, that you may declare His virtues who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). But, by some strange aberration, we love our slavery, we prefer the darkness of death to the light of life which Jesus Christ sheds round us. All our works, if we were animated by His spirit, would be dyed in His blood and ennobled by His merits; yet we stifle the promptings of this Divine spirit, in order that we may give ourselves to the spirit of worldliness; and actions

which would have been rendered Divine by His grace, become as dead, having nothing in common with Him.

II.

There is hardly a moment of our lives in which we are not influenced in some way by the life of Jesus Christ. If we resist temptation, it is the power of His blood resisting in us. If we purify ourselves by penance, His wounds heal ours. If we are enlightened by heavenly promptings, it is His blood which sheds the light upon us. If we repress anger and revenge, it is His death which helps us to die to ourselves, and becomes within us the germ of Divine and heavenly life. Ought we not to cling to the Cross, to kiss His saving wounds and bathe in them, as the only well-spring of life? Should we not follow Saint Paul's example in "always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. iv. 9), and rejoice to bear "the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. vi. 17) always in our body, that we may triumph over sin? Jesus Christ was not content with meriting for us the graces necessary for the practice of the Christian virtues, nor with becoming our Head and making our good works of value by His Divine personality; He went

farther, and Himself became our model; He willed to walk before us on the strait path which is to lead us to Heaven. To encourage us to suffer with resignation, He suffered first. He was meek and humble of heart that we might become so too. He lived a life of poverty to teach us to despise riches. The insults He forgave, the outrages He allowed to be inflicted on Him, the bloody death He consented to suffer, are so many eloquent lessons confirmed by His example. To sweeten the bitterness of the chalice He offers us, He drank it Himself to the dregs; and He was the first to practise His own Gospel so as to encourage His disciples to follow His footsteps. With such abundant means of help in His Cross and His blood, and such powerful encouragement in His example, what excuse is there for us if we are afraid to imitate our Divine Model and to conform ourselves to our Master ?

III.

" If any man will come after Me," says Jesus Christ, " let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me . . ." (Luke ix. 2, 3). He must be ready to sacrifice what is dearest to him. It is only at such a cost that he can belong to Me. Only illustrious teachers and masters of high degree are given to the children of Princes

and Kings; how great must be our dignity if He Who has been from all eternity in the bosom of God, the splendour of His glory, and the substantial image of His Godhead, has deigned to become man as we are, to be our Master and our model!

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US THE GREATNESS AND THE VALUE OF A SOUL.

I.

JUDGE, my soul, of the dignity and greatness of your destiny by the price of your redemption. Cast your eyes on the Cross where hangs your Saviour. It was for you He was reduced to that sad condition. It was for your salvation that His eyes were filled with tears, His mouth with prayers, and His heart with weeping. It was to snatch you from everlasting death, and obtain for you the happiness of Heaven, that He paid the penalty required by Divine Justice. His life and yours were put upon the Cross as in the balance, and you gained the advantage; Divine Wisdom decreed that it were better God-made-Man should lose His life, than you your salvation and your immortality.

II.

To judge of the price of a soul, we should try and understand the value of the life of

a God-made-Man, which was the price of our redemption. When men are in danger of shipwreck they throw overboard their most precious merchandise, thinking themselves fortunate to save their lives at such a cost. Jesus Christ for our redemption was cast into the abyss of death. O infinitely precious life, dearer than ever to me, how happy should I be, since I have been bought with the price of the blood of God! I will sacrifice everything to preserve you; what would it profit me to gain the whole world and lose my soul (Matt. xvi. 26), a soul which God has considered worthy of Him, a soul capable of glorifying Him to all eternity, a soul which the Son of God has redeemed from everlasting death by giving up His own life and atoning to Divine Justice in my place!

III.

"Let us make man to our image and likeness" (Gen. i. 26), said the Lord in the beginning of all things; and He "formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul . . ." (Gen. ii. 7). Our soul is the image of the Godhead. In animating and vivifying our body, the soul imbues it with striking characteristics of this likeness. The soul's dignity shines through all earthly impediments and cor-

poreal veils; the soul's majesty is imprinted on our countenance, and inspires a sort of fear and respect in even the wild beasts. Saint Augustine says that weakly children can lead and control herds of animals, one of which is strong enough to crush them; the dignity of their souls must be written on their foreheads, and some strange influence inspiring respect and fear must shine from their eyes. O man, you value yourself too much or not enough! You are vain of that within you which is vile and perishable, the graces of a body formed of clay and subject to corruption, while you neglect and undervalue your soul, living image of the Godhead, immortal substance sprung from the bosom of God!

IV.

We can judge of the difference between body and soul by the difference in the nourishment God has prepared for them. He feeds the body on the fruits of the earth and the flesh of animals; but His word, the promptings of His wisdom, and the Body and Blood of His Son are offered as nourishment to the soul. O my soul, how precious your life, and how divine, since you can only feed on Divine food! O you of little faith! how despicable are you amidst all your greatness, if you prefer the gross life of the body to this heavenly life!

V.

If you would understand, O my soul, the value God Himself sets on you and on your salvation, consider Jesus Christ, His only Son, nailed to the Cross. We were become the slaves of the Devil; we had been, in the words of Saint Paul, "sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14); and the Son of God gave Himself up to die to save us; to redeem our souls He gave His life. O soul, how infinite is your value, since the Son of God had to be your ransom! O life of the soul, the price the Son of God paid for you makes you well-nigh Divine!

VI.

We may say that the Son of God Himself thought the gain of a soul worth more than life. O soul, price of a great victory, you must be precious indeed, since you have fulfilled the desires of God-made-Man! Your salvation compensated Him for laying down His life. Oh, why can we not look upon you with our bodily eyes? Why must your beauty remain hidden beneath the veil of mortal flesh? You are more priceless than a thousand worlds, since the world was only created for your happiness, to be your footstool! The Lord of Heaven and earth deigns to seek you; His "delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31), and to communicate to them His glory.

How precious has the Cross of your Saviour rendered you! He bought you, not with gold and silver, but at the price of the blood He shed. He was immolated for you as "a lamb unspotted and undefiled" (1 Pet. i. 19). If we knew the price of our souls, how careful we should be to preserve within them that gift of God, the Divine life which Jesus Christ obtained for us by His death! Should we so lightly expose this precious gift to the dangers and seductions of the world? Should we not keep it hid with Christ in God, as a priceless treasure to be hidden from the thievish cupidity around us? "Mother," said a newly converted sinner, who had taken refuge in solitude so as not to risk his salvation, "I wish to save my soul; could you guarantee its safety if I were to yield to your persuasions and expose it to the world where it has been ruined once already?"

VII.

Saint Paul well knew the value of a soul when he said to the Corinthians: "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?" (2 Cor. xi. 29). This great Apostle knew the price of a soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ: "For I wished myself to be anathema from Christ for my brethren who are my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3).

NINTH MEDITATION.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION.

I.

We must save our souls, whatever be the cost. If needs be, during the warfare we have to wage here below, we must leave our worldly goods unprotected, we must risk our health, we must spare neither our body nor even life itself; but our souls, those immortal images of the Godhead, must be saved, even at the sacrifice of all the rest. Our Divine Master commanded us to have no fear of those who can kill the body only, but to "rather fear Him that can destroy both body and soul into Hell" (Matt. x. 28). Let us imitate Joseph and leave our garment in the hands of our enemy (Gen. xxxix. 12), that we may preserve our innocence. Let us endure privations on earth that we may possess Heaven. Let us sacrifice, if needs be, this perishable life, that we may deserve to enjoy life eternal.

II.

We must not judge of the soul by the grossness of the body in which it is contained, as

a prince loaded with fetters might be shut up in a dark dungeon. Poverty, affliction, and illness may render the body repulsive, without robbing the soul of any of its nobility or greatness. It is a priceless diamond hidden in a heap of mire and dung. The prince will leave the dungeon wherein he languished, with added glory; the diamond will be plucked from the mire which dimmed its brightness, and will shine all the more brilliantly.

III.

Jesus Christ lived on earth in the greatest poverty and humiliation. He appeared to the eyes of men as the least among them. He was born in a stable; He lived by the labour of His hands, beneath a humble roof; His body was ill-treated until it bore no resemblance to anything human. Who, that judged by externals only, would have said that beneath this lowly appearance was concealed the King of angels, the Saviour of men, the majesty of God? And who, on the deceiving evidence of his senses, would say that souls more great than Heaven and earth, and valued as highly as the life of God-made-Man, are contained in the bodies of beggars covered with rags and filth, sick people rotting away in poverty, and hideous personifications of wretchedness and misery? Is there any misfortune equal to the eternal loss of the soul?

IV.

This conclusion will show how I should think of my perishable body, doomed to return to the earth from which it came, compared to the value I should set on my immortal soul, which will return to God, its principle. Riches, sensuous and earthly joys, pomp and grandeur, worldly honours —all these are meant for the body, and not to be valued above it. Charity, patience, humility, the word of God, the Sacraments, source of life—these are what I should seek after and love, disdaining all that can but dazzle my eyes and appeal to my senses.

V.

If Jesus Christ is so anxious for the salvation of my soul, should I not feel some anxiety myself? Should my soul not be even dearer to me than to Him? Alas! if I lose it, all is lost. All is lost—nay, not only do I forfeit eternal happiness, but I draw down upon my head infinite and never-ending calamity. If I had two souls, I could survive the loss of one; but I have only one, and it lies with me to decide whether it shall be everlastingly happy or eternally reprobate.

VI.

Do we really understand the misfortune of eternal damnation? Let us try and

realize it by meditating, at the foot of the Cross, on the words of our Divine Master: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26). What kind of existence can he look for if he draws down upon himself the sentence of everlasting death; what exchange can a man give "for his soul"? (Matt. xvi. 26). Meditate upon this truth, you who know so well the price of perishable things and look so carefully after all your interests except those of your soul.

VII.

When we see the fortunate ones of this world plunged in pleasures and delights, riches and honour, let us beware of admiring them or envying their prosperity. It is but a dream which death will soon disperse, and in eternity they will be stripped of all, and sunk in an abyss of misery. If we have a share in the poverty, the sufferings, and the opprobrium of Jesus Christ, we should rejoice; our misfortunes will soon be over, and the blessed eternity awaiting us shall have no end.

VIII.

Eternity! Who shall teach me to plumb thy depths? Who shall teach me the solemn meaning of eternal happiness or misery? I can find nothing in earthly good or evil

to give me an idea of what it means. Cross of my Saviour, you alone can make me realize it! How great must be the happiness of Heaven, since to purchase it God-made-Man must needs shed all His blood upon the Cross! How horrible is damnation, how frightful Hell, since to shut those gates and save us, the incarnate God was willing to bear the malediction of earth and Heaven!

TENTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR.

I.

"My little children" (1 John ii. 18), says the Beloved Disciple, "let us love one another" (1 John iv. 7). Brotherly love is the distinguishing characteristic of the children of God. How do we know how much God has always loved us? By His laying down His life for us. Therefore we too must love each other and, if needs be, "lay down our lives for our brethren" (1 John iii. 16). It was from the heart of Jesus and from His wounds that His disciples drank in this heavenly doctrine. Let us listen to Jesus Christ nailed to the Cross for the redemption of mankind: the voice of His blood, more eloquent than even the tongues of His Apostles, will teach us the precepts of brotherly love.

II.

We were all brothers in the natural order, and that is reason enough for mutual love.

In the bond which Jesus Christ sealed with His blood, our fraternity becomes ennobled. We are not children of Adam only, but of God; brothers of His only Son, and heirs to His kingdom. Thus we should love one another as children of a common Father; and when this Father is God, how sincere, how warm, how pure should be our love! And Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of this great family, Who was immolated for the salvation of us all, even the greatest sinners—is He among those brethren whom we should love so tenderly, however wicked they may be? Among some of our brethren, are there no sorrows we fail to pity, no needs we fail to supply to the best of our power, no injuries we are disinclined to forgive? If there are, we are hating our fellow-men with a hatred which would apply to God Himself and to our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be hating the children of God and the brethren of Jesus Christ, whom He so loved that He shed His blood for them.

III.

Since such an excess of love nailed Jesus Christ to the Cross, the whole of Divine law seems concentrated in the one precept of brotherly love. It was the only one He specially announced as His own. "A new commandment I give unto you: That you

love one another as I have loved you" (John xiii. 34). I love you as brothers, as My Father's children, as members of a Body of which I am the Head; My love has caused me to lay down My life for your salvation. It is thus you should love one another, and "by this shall all men know that you are My disciples" (John xiii. 35). "This is My commandment . . ." (the special mark of the bond which unites us) "That you love one another as I have loved you . . ." (John xv. 12); I can show you "no greater love" (John xv. 13) than by dying for you.

IV.

The Cross of Christ gives us many reasons why we should love each other, and overcome our natural repugnances by the power of love. By the boon of His redemption we are not only "called," but have become, the "children of God" (1 John iii. 1), and should not the children of God, our common Father, love and welcome one another, imitating their Heavenly Father, "Who maketh the sun to rise upon the good and the bad . . ."? (Matt. v. 35). The blood of Jesus Christ has welded all Christians into one body, of which each is a member and He their Head (Rom. xii. 5), and ought not all the members of one Body to be in sympathy? Do not the head and hand

both bend towards the foot, to draw out the thorn which wounds it? Christians without faith, and unworthy the name, pause, think, and tremble! When hatred divides you, and you wound one another, it is the body of Jesus Christ Himself that you are rending asunder. Why did Our Lord assemble all His members at one table and feed them with one Bread, giving to all His Body and His Blood which was shed for all alike? In order that He might unite them all in one spirit to their Head, and keep burning in their hearts the fire of love which He came down on earth to ignite.

V.

Jesus Christ, Who commanded us to love one another as He Himself loved us, died for the salvation of the greatest sinners. He received meekly the kiss of Judas, He cast on Peter a glance of compassion at the moment he denied Him, He offered His blood for the miscreants who were shedding It; He took no vengenace on their cruelty—His only answer to their insults and blasphemies was to plead for them to be forgiven, and to make excuses for them. He is our model. Because some of our fellow-creatures do not love us, because they hate and persecute us, is that any reason for our not loving them, even if their faults and their bad disposition make them unworthy of our love?

VI.

What shall we render to Jesus Christ for all we have received of Him? How can we show that we realize the boon of our redemption, and repay Him for the blood He shed for us? He Himself points out an easy way. Let us love our fellow-men as He has loved us, and do for them what He did for us. They are His members, and He will look upon all we do for them as done unto Him (Matt. xxv. 40). "For I was hungry," He will say to His chosen, at the Last Judgment, "and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Matt. xxv. 35); "naked and you covered Me; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matt. xxv. 36). If Jesus Christ is so pleased with us for doing what common humanity prompts even infidels to do, how much more will He approve us for indulgence to our brother's fault, courage in bearing insults and bad treatment from our fellow-men, zeal in trying to sanctify them, and sacrifices made to obtain their salvation!

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

BROTHERLY LOVE.

I.

"EVERYONE who loveth him who begot," says Saint John, "loveth him also who is born of him" (1 John v. 1). It follows, therefore, that whoever loves Jesus Christ, Who gives the light of grace to all Christians, loves all Christians who are spiritual children of His Precious Blood; and whosoever does not love his fellow-men, who are children of God and members of Jesus Christ, does not love Our Lord Himself (1 John iii. 1). "If any man say I love God," says the same Apostle, "and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God Whom he seeth not . . ." (1 John iv. 20), and Whose infinitely lovable perfections cannot be apprehended by the senses?

II.

All I do to my neighbour, for good or evil, is done to Jesus Christ. Saint Martin

covered the nudity of a beggar with the half of his cloak, and Jesus Christ appeared to him wearing it. Saul pursued the Christians to destroy them, and Jesus Christ, appearing to him, says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts x. 4). "Amen I say to you . . ." every good or evil deed you have done, Jesus Christ will say to His chosen at the Last Judgment, as well as to the damned: ". . . As long as you did it to one of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. xxv. 40). I must see only Jesus Christ in my fellow-men; I must love them in spite of their having nothing lovable about them; because they are the children of our common Father, because Jesus Christ is their Saviour as well as mine, and because, in spite of my own unworthiness, He is loving and forbearing towards me. I will love God, I will love my Saviour in every way that I can and that He wishes me to love Him, in Himself and outside Himself, in His image on earth, and in the members of that Mystical Body of which He is the Head.

III.

Jesus Christ promises that at the Last Judgment He will give the happiness of Heaven only to compassionate and loving souls; He condemns to the pains of Hell only those who are hard of heart and pitiless

towards their fellow-men. We might almost think love the one and only Christian virtue. That is because "charity" alone contains all others, and "covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8). Deeds of loving-kindness and charity never fail to touch God's Heart and win His love; He repays us a hundredfold for all we do for others, for our alms and all our efforts to help and succour our fellow-men; a hundredfold for the trouble we take to instruct and sanctify them, for our patience in bearing with their faults, for our generosity in forgiving them their trespasses against us, and for rendering to them good for evil. "Give," says our Divine Master, "and it shall be given unto you" (Luke vi. 38). Be patient, long-suffering, kind and generous to your fellow-men, and God will show Himself the same towards you; in exchange for a few worldly goods of which you may have deprived yourselves, and in return for a few small sacrifices made in the cause of charity, He will pour into your bosoms spiritual treasures "pressed down and running over" (Luke vi. 38).

IV.

The Saints only discovered the secret of laying up an immense wealth of merits by imitating the zeal and charity of their Divine Master. There is no better way for

sinners to become reconciled to God, Who has waived His own rights in favour of our fellow-men. When the penitent sinner who has done some charitable deed, stifled some feeling of revenge, or forgiven some injury for Jesus Christ's sake, throws himself at the foot of the Cross, grace will flow into his soul, and he need no longer doubt the loving mercy of God. This assurance came to a youth named Gualbert, who by a deeply spiritual impulse was moved to forgive an enemy whom he had been about to slay in revenge and who, in imploring Gualbert's pity, had extended his arms in the form of a Cross. Gualbert then entered a church and kneeled down to pray before a Crucifix, which bowed Its head in sign of approval. His act of charity was the beginning of his conversion, and of the holy life which obtained for him the honours of the Church.

V.

What does faith tell me when I kneel at the foot of the Cross? It tells me that I am a miserable slave, burdened with sin and condemned to everlasting death, and that, as I could neither appease the righteous anger of my sovereign nor pay my debt, His only Son, touched with compassion for me, took my place, atoned for me, and laid down His life to save me from perdition.

And shall such a one as I revenge myself for even slight injuries done me by my fellow-men, whom He has redeemed as well as me? When so much compassion and indulgence has been shown to me, am I to be hard and unforgiving to my fellow-men? O Cross of Jesus! every time I allow revenge to enter my heart, every time I close it against patience and compassion, I become unworthy of you, I insult you!

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US THAT WE NO LONGER BELONG TO OURSELVES, BUT TO JESUS CHRIST, WHO DIED FOR US.

I.

JESUS CHRIST died for us, that He might have the right to reign over us. "You are not your own . . ." says Saint Paul, you belong to Jesus Christ; ". . . . for you are bought with a great price . . ." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20), and what fruits of conquest can be more truly His own than those for whom He shed His Blood? I was a wretched slave, and Jesus Christ set me free by becoming a slave in my place. I was condemned to death, and Jesus Christ, to save me, laid down His own life. To gain my allegiance He shed His Blood, and triumphed on the Cross over all the powers which held me captive. I cost Him so great a price that the least I can do is to offer Him again the liberty He won for me, the life He restored to me, and my ungrudging devotion.

II.

As a creature, I was subject to the sovereign power of God, I was the slave of my Creator. Sin subjected me to the power of the Devil, and I became his slave. By my redemption I have become the slave of Jesus Christ, a glorious slavery which has destroyed the Devil's power over me, and ennobled my subjection to my Creator. I belong to Jesus Christ as His work and as His conquest. The omnipotence which brought me out of nothingness, and the love which rescued me from the slavery of sin and from the pit of Hell, have an inalienable right over me. O my soul, sweet is the slavery which binds you to your Creator and Saviour, and precious are the bonds which link you to Divine power and mercy! No greater misfortune could there be than to break them and escape from the sovereign rule of Christ!

III.

Even sinners and those most in enmity with Jesus Christ cannot evade His sovereignty. He has been "appointed by God to be Judge of the living and of the dead" (Acts x. 42). "He humbled Himself," says Saint Paul, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. . . ." "God also hath exalted Him . . ." above all mankind, ". . . and hath given Him a Name which

is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth . . ." (Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10). The Cross of Jesus has given Him an inalienable right over me, a right He will exercise either in mercy or in justice. If I refuse to be the happy slave of His love, I must necessarily become the unhappy slave of His justice. Whether in Heaven or Hell, I shall be equally subject to His sovereign power; and from His Cross must flow either my eternal happiness or my eternal reprobation. The Blood He shed for me will plead with God for my salvation if I have been faithful, or will cry to Him for vengeance if I fall away from Him. I cannot help belonging to Him; the only choice I have is whether I will live under the sovereignty of His mercy or of His justice.

IV.

Therefore, if only out of gratitude, I ought to belong to Jesus and to give myself ungrudgingly to Him. He saved me from everlasting death by the sacrifice of His own life. How monstrously ungrateful it would be to scorn, betray, or wound such a generous benefactor. But I belong to Him for a far more unanswerable reason: He bought me, He ransomed me with His Blood; I belong

to Him in all justice. And how could I evade His sovereignty? Where could I hide from the justice of my Saviour, Who has power over Heaven and earth, and Whom God made Judge of all the living?

V.

"I have glorified Thee on earth," said Jesus Christ, when He was about to go to His death, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. . . ." I have taught men what I learned of Thee; I go to the Cross to redeem them and reconcile them to Thee by shedding My Blood. . . . "And now glorify Me . . ." (John xvii. 4, 5; xv. 15). What is the reward Jesus Christ asks of His Father with so much intensity? That the men for whom He was about to die should know and glorify Him; that He might be their King as well as their Redeemer; and that His empire over all creatures should be so universal that none could obtain eternal life save through Him. God heard Him, says Saint Paul, "for His reverence . . ." (Heb. v. 7), and for His perfect obedience to His Father's Will. And His Name, after being the plaything of the Gentiles and a scandal to the Jews, is adored throughout the earth and dreaded in Hell; "for," says the Prince of the Apostles, "there is no other name under Heaven given

to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Therefore, we must either believe in Jesus Christ, invoke His Holy Name and be united to Him, or give ourselves up as lost.

VI.

Jesus Christ suffered, He shed His tears and His Blood, He laid down His life, that I might belong to Him and might pass from the power of the Devil into His own. I have it in my power to console Him for His sufferings, to dry His tears, to offer Him the fruits of His Passion, to repay Him for all the opprobrium and the tortures He endured. Can I be so ungrateful, and so blind to my own interest, as to refuse Him my allegiance, and to prefer to serve the world and the Devil? Could I be so insensate as not to give myself entirely to Him, knowing that, do what I will, I cannot evade His sovereignty; that all eternity must bear witness to the triumph of the Cross, whether in Heaven by the communication of Our Lord's happiness and glory, or in Hell by the rigours of His justice?

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

IN WHAT SENSE WE BELONG TO JESUS CHRIST.

I.

JESUS CHRIST could truly say of the souls He had redeemed by His death, that they were His blood and His life. They are His in exchange for the blood He shed and the life He laid down, in the same sense that the property a man purchases belongs to him in lieu of the money he has spent upon it. My soul, therefore, belongs to Jesus Christ as much as do His blood and His life, which were the price of it; and if through my sins I am so unhappy as to lose it, it is not my own property I am losing, but something belonging to Christ—His blood and His life—and I thus become really and truly accessory to the death of the Incarnate God. How I ought to fear His reproaches, if I refuse to live in submission to His law! Unhappy man, He will say to me, restore the blood I shed for you, the life I sacrificed for your salvation!

II.

Saint Paul says that those bad Christians who by their sins crucify God again in themselves cannot expect to escape His terrible judgments and His avenging fires. I speak of such a flame of vengeance as will glorify Jesus Christ, and punish His enemies for ever without consuming them. The same Apostle tells us that whosoever transgressed the Mosaic law was put to death without pity or reprieve. What punishments, then, must be in store for a transgressor of the law of Jesus Christ, for the sacrilegious Christian who tramples underfoot the Blood of the Son of God, that Divine and Precious Blood whose shedding was the consummation of the covenant between God and Man! (Heb. v. 6; x. 27, 28).

III.

In a faithful soul, living in trustful dependence on our Saviour's love, Jesus Christ reigns as in a kingdom which He has bought with His blood. In such a soul He finds, in some sense, the equivalent of the life He laid down in order to possess it. By giving myself to Him I give back the blood He shed and the life He laid down for me. The glory I can render Him will compensate for His sufferings and humiliations; by His

grace abiding within me, He will rise again in my heart and reign there. It is only in my soul that He can be victorious over death, the death He suffered that He might possess it entirely. If my heart belongs to Him, He can reign there with all the glory due to Him. If I am a slave to sin, Jesus Christ is still within me, but in a state of death and humiliation, as He was on the Cross; for according to Saint Paul's teaching, Christians who are in sin are "crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery" (Heb. vi. 6). O my soul! while you still have the free choice between serving God or Mammon, you are weighing in your hands the life and death of your Saviour. If you are faithful to Him, you restore the life He gave for you; if you choose the kingdom of this world and of the Devil, you are guilty of His death, and at the Last Day He will demand of you the blood He shed in vain.

IV.

"Lie not one to another," says Saint Paul, "stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds . . . and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him" (Col. iii. 9, 10). The "old" man is Adam, with his lusts—the flesh with its concupis-

cences, the world and its pride, and all the irregular impulses we inherit from a sinful ancestor. The "new man" is the Incarnate Son of God, the perfect Image of the Godhead, Jesus Christ; Who, taking upon Himself the iniquities of the old man, nailed him to the Cross, to die with him. Let us therefore set before ourselves the ideal of the Christian life we profess to follow, in the teaching of Saint Paul. Such a life implies the death, the crucifixion, and the burial of the "old" or sinful man, in imitation of the death, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus Christ, that the body of sin in us may be destroyed, and that we may no longer be sinful members, but members of Jesus Christ "in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4-8). Till my last breath the old and the new men will struggle together for the mastery in my soul, waging a war between flesh and spirit, between Jesus Christ and the Devil. It is for me to decide which shall conquer, but I must never forget that on the triumph of Jesus Christ depends my eternal happiness, and that the victory of the Devil means my eternal reprobation.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST HELPS US TO LOVE GOD AND BE LOVED BY HIM IN RETURN.

I.

GOD loves Jesus Christ with an infinite love, the love with which He loves Himself. God loves Our Lord because He is His Only Son and of the same nature; because as Man He was always His faithful servant, subservient to the Divine Will; and because, on the Cross, Jesus Christ offered to the Sovereign Majesty of God a sacrifice worthy of Him. That is the reason why God has exalted Him above all creatures, making Him the channel of His omnipotence and of all His riches; why He grants nothing on earth nor in Heaven save in His Name, why we have no access to the Throne of Mercy save through the Cross, and why "there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Rom. v. 2; Phil. ii. 8, 9; Acts iv. 12). If God so loved His Son, He must love all who belong to Him. We belong more to Jesus Christ

than to ourselves; we are the conquest of His Blood, we are His members and a part of His Sacred Humanity. God therefore loves us in proportion as the Cross unites us to His Son. O adorable Cross, unquenchable source of salvation and life, I will cling to you in union with my Saviour, I will bathe in His Blood, and draw from His Wounds and His Heart the mercy and the love of my God!

II.

The Godhead "inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). Before the coming of Jesus Christ mortal men, being unable to perceive with the eyes of either body or soul that majesty which is as invisible as it is incomprehensible, made to themselves idols in their own image and worshipped them. God in His mercy sent on earth His only Son, clothed in human form. He willed Him to be the visible work of the invisible Deity, and ". . . in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally . . ." (Col. ii. 9). O marvellous invention of God's love to man! Henceforward I may adore a creature without fear of committing idolatry! In the person of Jesus Christ it is God Himself Whom I adore, it is He I love, it is to Him I consecrate and give myself.

It is in Jesus Christ that I must seek my God, it is in His person that I must love Him. ". . . I am in the Father and the Father in Me . . ." (John xiv. 10, 11). I am also in those I have redeemed by the effect of My Spirit, and they in Me by the communication of My Merits. O my soul, what privileges the Cross of your Saviour gives you! Love Jesus Crucified and you are loving your Creator. Love the Son Who redeemed you, according to His promise: ". . . He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father" (John xiv. 21).

III.

Christianity does not consist precisely in worshipping one God. The Jews worshipped one God, yet they are in enmity with the name of Christian; Mohammedans worship one God, yet they are not Christians. Christianity consists in knowing and worshiping God-made-Man. "Now this is eternal life," says Jesus Christ to His Father: "that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). The more reasonable a man is, the more truly does he deserve the name of man; therefore the better we love and know Jesus Christ, the more Christian we are. And how can we better learn to know Him and increase our love than by meditating on Him

nailed to the Cross for our salvation? What was the chief pride of the Apostle Saint Paul? That he judged not himself to know anything but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2).

IV.

But it is not enough to know Jesus Christ to obtain eternal life: the devils and the reprobate will know Him to all eternity, and nevertheless will be in everlasting misery. It is not enough to love Him by words alone; we must love Him with a love which makes us resemble Him, which transforms us into His likeness, a love which shall leave upon body and soul alike the sacred imprint of the Cross. We must love Him as did the Apostles who "indeed went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41), and whose boast was their share of the humiliations of His Cross. We must love Him as did Saint Paul, who gloried in his chains, and called himself "an old man and now a prisoner also of Jesus Christ" (Philem. 9; Rom. i. 1; Gal. i.; Eph. iii. 1).

V.

The love of Jesus Christ is a short and easy way to sanctity. He makes us like Himself.

By the true alchemy of love He transforms us into Himself; and sanctity, like predestination, consists in resembling Jesus Christ. If we love Jesus Christ we shall soon become chaste, patient, charitable; for our hearts will be close to His, the source of all sanctity. All we need ask of God is the love of His Son; for, as Saint Paul says: "Hath He not also with Him given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). During our life our greatest treasure should be our Crucifix, that it may remind us constantly of the Precious Blood and the love of Jesus Christ; and at the hour of death, that it may revive our trust and our faith, and help us to commit our souls into the hands of our Saviour.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX SHOWS US HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST LOVES US.

I.

LISTEN, my soul, to the most beautiful lesson the Crucifix can teach you. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13), friends who know not their benefactor, who insult Him, and are accessories to His death. To that excess did the Son of God carry His love: while we were yet His Father's enemies He shed His Blood to wash away our sins; He daily offers the sacrifice of His life to reconcile us to God, and to redeem us. We were in rebellion against the Majesty of God; to win our love He became the God of charity, He clothed Himself in the fleece of the lambs He willed to save, and gave His life for the salvation of His flock. O Jesus, true Shepherd, Saviour of my soul, is my heart so hard that I cannot respond to Your kindness, and render You

love for love? Shall the glory of Your Cross and the merits of Your sacrifice be of no avail to my soul?

II.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said Jesus Christ, "will draw all things to Myself" (John xii. 32). Who can resist so much love? When men give Me their hearts, that compensates Me for the sacrifice I offer for them. I take their love in exchange for My blood and My life. It was a small thing to do, if they will only love Me, if they will "attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lam. i. 12). That is the message of my Crucifix, whenever I contemplate the sufferings of my Saviour. Shall I be wretch enough to disappoint Him? No, I will nail my heart to His Cross, that He may destroy in me the desires which fetter me to the world, and may make me really His.

III.

Jesus Christ was made Mediator between God and man. To accomplish this wonderful covenant, He must needs be both God and Man; God that He may reconcile His Father with men, Man that He may win men to God. To be our proxy and pay the forfeit to Divine Justice for our sins, it behoved

Him to become Man; if His atonement is to be of infinite value, and to destroy sin in us, by the unction of the Holy Spirit, He can be no less than God. All His life was spent in the exercise of this glorious mediation. His love caused Him to give Himself equally to God and to man; He spent His nights in prayer and His days in preaching His Gospel, succouring the afflicted, and converting sinners (Matt. iv. 23; ix.; Mark i. 39; vi. 6; Luke vi. 12; Acts x. 38). He was not content to bring about our reconciliation with God during the days of His life only; He willed to perpetuate it by His death, "making peace through the Blood of His Cross" (Col. i. 20).

IV.

O incomprehensible mystery of love and mercy! God, Who lit the flames of Hell to punish sin, Who "spared not the angels that sinned" (2 Pet. ii. 4), condescends Himself to become the Saviour of sinful men! Instead of taking just vengeance on our iniquities, He bore them in His own person. Instead of punishing criminals, He Himself came on earth "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3); He took our sins upon Him and gave us His merits in exchange. To deliver His people from bondage He became a slave, to expiate our sins He suffered

all the pangs they deserved. O my soul, your sovereign Lord and God put on a mortal body such as yours, He lived and died for you; what less can you do in return than live and die for Him? You would owe Him this debt of gratitude even if you were His equal in nature and in majesty. "And Christ died for all," says Saint Paul, "that they also who live may not now live in themselves, but unto Him Who died and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15).

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

WHY JESUS CHRIST LOVES MEN.

I.

GOD, to show His mercy towards sinners even more manifestly than His just judgments on the rebel angels, became Man in Jesus Christ, in order that an Incarnate God, consecrating and sanctifying human nature, might make men sharers of the Divine Nature and children of God (2 Pet. i. 4; Rom. viii. 16). Jesus Christ became the Firstborn among men, our Head and Mediator (Rom. viii. 16; Eph. iv. 15; 1 Tim. ii. 5), and the channel of God's mercy and providence towards all mankind. Since the Word was made Flesh for our sakes, we need not wonder at the infinite love of Jesus Christ for us. His glorious destiny was to unite our manhood to His Humanity, that He might associate it with His Godhead. To consummate this wonderful work, it behoved Him to do all He did. He gave His life and His life's work to us, He expiated our sins in His sinless Flesh, He abased Himself

before the Majesty of God, offering Him the sacrifice of His life as the price of our reconciliation.

II.

O wondrous scheme of Divine wisdom and mercy! If Jesus Christ had been but a man like ourselves His love for us would have been but a finite love, and valueless in the sight of God. If the Word of God had not been made Flesh, there could have been no kind of proportion between Him and us, and He could not have loved us. He descended to our level by becoming Man; He was made in our likeness, that He might have a reason for pitying, loving, and saving us. God united Himself to our nature in Jesus Christ in order that Christ's love for us might be truly Divine, and the sacrifice He offered for us of infinite value. O amazing and inconceivable love! My God took on my likeness by becoming man; uniting Himself to my infirmities and my wretchedness, that He might make me like to Him, and by His grace a sharer in the Divine Nature. He veiled His sovereign Majesty in order to unite Himself to me; it would be sad indeed if I could not die to self and fight against my human infirmities to live in union with Him!

III.

Christ's love for men, and all He did and suffered to save them, need be no mystery

to me if I believe rightly in the Incarnation. His mercy and love were boundless, because God was their Source; they were the mercy and love of God Himself. The eternal torments of Hell are justified by the infinity of Divine Justice, the riches of God's love by the infinity of Divine mercy. O Jesus, You cannot refuse to pity and to love me, however unworthy I may be, since it was to pity, love, and save me that the Word of God was so closely united to Your Humanity! In this thought I put all my trust; it supports me under the burden of my trials, and teaches me to hope that the more I realize Your love for me the more my heart will burn with ardent love of You.

IV.

There are many reasons why Jesus Christ loves us. We are His inheritance, the possession He acquired at the cost of His life; and all men cherish dearly that which has cost them dear. We were a barren field, a weed-grown vineyard: He bought the worthless ground, He planted and cultivated it, He watered it with His Sweat and with His Blood; and He yearns to reap the fruits of His labour. We are His brethren, and although He reigns above us in glory, He cannot refuse to recognize us in our lowly estate. His love brings Him down from His

Throne to embrace us, as Joseph embraced His brethren. We are His children, for He died to give us life, and shall not a Father love His own? Can He neglect or forget those of tender years, or the sick and feeble, who need His care even more? We are His members, and He has promised to cherish us as the apple of His eye: O my Saviour, can I doubt Your love? But if You love me so tenderly, why do I not love You more?

V.

True it is that we are sinners; but our very sins give us a claim on the mercy and love of Jesus Christ. He shed His Blood solely to wash away our sins; He is our Saviour solely because we are sinners. Upon our sins, I say it boldly, rests the glory of His Cross. He is the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for His sheep (John x.; xiv.; xv.), and His most anxious care is for His stray lambs. It was to the most abandoned sinners that He showed the most love during His life on earth. He met them half-way, He welcomed them, He allowed them to join His followers. A kind-hearted doctor will set aside the whole in order to give all his attention to the sick; so our Lord seemed even to prefer sinners to the righteous. O my Saviour, daily You renew the miracle of the Woman of Samaria, and Magdalen

is better known to the world by her tender love of You than by the record of her profligate youth. There is still on earth many a Zacharias whom You deign to convert, many a Matthew whom You snatch from the business of this world to serve You, many a Peter who learns to search his conscience at one merciful glance from You. Alas ! there are still many traitorous Judases whom You warn and kiss with the kiss of peace, yet who are still Your enemies and wound Your love by their impenitence. O my Saviour, it is not the enormity of my sins which will ever cause me to despair of Your mercy and love. The greater my sin, the greater my trust in You. I will only think of my sins in humility and detestation, I will mingle my tears with Your blood to wash them all away.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE CRUCIFIX TEACHES US TO BEAR OUR TRIALS PATIENTLY.

I.

WHAT did Saint Paul say to the Christians of his day, to comfort them under affliction, and encourage them to bear their constant persecutions with patience? He told them to be always "looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of (their) faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame . . . upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself" (Heb. xii. 2, 3).

II.

When Jesus Christ, burdened with our iniquities and nailed to the Cross, drank the Cup offered to Him during His passion, He kept the bitter dregs for Himself. The nails and thorns which pierced Him seemed to leave their sharpest points in His flesh, His pangs exhausted the extreme agony of pain, and when sufferings come to us from

Him, as running water flowing through a gold-mine, they bring with them a soothing consoling unction which changes them to joy.

III.

Christians who suffer, if you would gain courage and consolation look on Jesus suffering! You suffer of necessity, He by choice and for love of you. He by His sufferings bore the penalty of the sins you have committed; should you not share it with Him? Shall the culprit be treated more gently than his innocent proxy? He suffered as your Master, to encourage you by His example; He willingly faced danger and death, to smooth the rough path which men must tread on their way through life. By submitting willingly to necessary trials, you can unite your sufferings to those your Saviour bore for love of you.

IV.

When we are tried in this world, whether by reverses of fortune, poverty, or sickness, or exposed to hatred, calumny, and unjust persecution; if, when we try to do good we encounter only obstacles and all our labour seems in vain, it is easy to find consolation at the foot of the Cross. The Cross teaches us that our Master was treated thus all the

days of His life. He walks before us on the way of the Cross; to smooth our path and bless it, He has watered it with His blood. What glory for us to tread in His footsteps! What joy to resemble Him in those very characteristics which made Him our Saviour, and raised Him above all creatures to sit at the right hand of the Sovereign Majesty of God!

V.

In what does the mystery of Christian predestination consist? Saint Paul tells us that it is "to be made conformable to the image of His Son . . ." (Rom. viii. 29), in the same way that for a body to be perfect, there must be a certain conformity between the Head and the members. That is why the Apostle declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12); if we are to be His brethren and joint-heirs with Him, it is on condition that we reproduce His crucified life in our souls, and "suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. viii. 17). Can we complain of the price of our happiness? "For I reckon," continues Saint Paul, "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

VI.

In this valley of tears, whatever be our lot, we cannot evade suffering. Most of us suffer without consolation, merit, or hope. The faithful Christian will be resigned to his trials by the thought of his Saviour's Cross; he knows his own sufferings are the treasure which will one day purchase for him eternal glory and happiness. With the vivid faith of a Saint Paul, he can say: "Great is my confidence . . . great is my glorying . . . I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (2 Cor. vii. 4), and though this vivid faith may at times be dimmed, yet by the power of the Cross he can be brave and patient.

CONCLUSION TO THE FIRST PART.

DEVOUT PRACTICES WHICH SHOULD BE THE FRUIT OF THE PRECEDING MEDITATIONS.

I.

THROUGHOUT my life I will follow the example of Saint Paul, and like that fervent Apostle of the Cross, I will glory in knowing nothing but "Jesus and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 3). I will engrave His Divine Cross on my heart, I will imprint it on my soul, I will see and speak but of the Cross. The Cross shall quench the flames of my impure desires; the Cross shall guard my eyes, my tongue, my ears; the Cross shall sanctify me under temptation, defend me against my ghostly enemies, and support me under my trials; the Cross shall make me chaste, pure, meek and humble of heart, and sanctify all my actions with the holiness of Jesus Christ.

II.

I will worship the Cross of my Saviour, not only in myself, but in all my surroundings. I will rejoice with those whose daily

life the Cross has sanctified, I will weep with those who outrage it daily by their crimes. When I behold the multitude of the children of God increasing by the virtue of baptism, or converted sinners cleansing themselves in the saving waters of penance, I will say: "These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the Blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 14). For none can become a child of God save by the power of the Cross, none can be purified from sin save by the Precious Blood which flows therefrom. I will strive to honour my Saviour's Cross by checking the growth of sin, whether in myself, by leading a life conformable in all things to His Holy Gospel; or in others, by my example, my advice, and all the means in my power. And I will look upon it as the greatest of misfortunes when I see Our Lord denied, betrayed, outraged, and crucified afresh by a multitude of sins.

III.

In the person of the poor, the suffering, and the afflicted, I will honour my Saviour suffering on the Cross. I will look upon them as His members and His image on earth. For His sake I will take pity on their sufferings, I will console and help them to the best of my ability, remembering that Jesus

Christ has promised to accept whatever is done to one of his "least brethren" as done to Him (Matt. xxv. 40).

IV.

I will look upon all my trials and sorrows as a participation in my Saviour's Cross, on which I hope to live and die. I will think myself fortunate only in so far as I can suffer with and for Him; and in order that my heart may never be detached from His Cross, I will keep ever before me the Divine Words: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke ix. 23). To keep my faith vivid and my courage strong, I will constantly meditate on these words of Saint Paul: "Looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon Him that endured much opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 2-4). My most earnest endeavour and my sweetest consolation shall be to participate as often and as worthily as possible, in the Sacraments which contain the treasure of His merits to be

shared by His members. Faithfully, respectfully, and lovingly will I seek the benefit of the Precious Blood He shed for me upon the Cross. I will daily unite myself to Him as a member to his Head, immolating myself with Him in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. With contrite and humble heart, I will constantly bathe in the healing waters of penance, where His Blood, poured out upon the Cross to wipe out sin, shall wash me yet cleaner and cleaner from my iniquities. I will often present myself in humble confidence at the Table where He feeds the children of God with His Flesh and His Blood. I will receive Him as the Physician Who is to heal my infirmities, as my Saviour, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world, Whose Blood will mark my soul with the seal of salvation. My unworthiness, instead of being a reason for avoiding Jesus, should be a motive for seeking Him, since I can only rise above it by having recourse to Him. While I cry to Him, with Saint Peter, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke v. 8), I will still cling to Him, and will not let Him go until He has changed me into His likeness, that it may be no longer I, but He that liveth in me, as the Head gives life to all the members of the body.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

PART II

FOR THE HOUR OF DEATH

PREFACE

DEAR READER,—

I offer you this fresh series of Meditations, as being the most important matter you can read or listen to, whenever it shall please God to call you to Himself. Do not wait for the hour of death to arm yourself against his darts, and meditate upon those truths of Christianity that will be most likely to strengthen your faith and sustain your courage when you are suddenly warned that you have to leave this world. At such a time our senses are so overwhelmed and our souls so weak that it is seldom we can realize the importance of what is happening. Yet upon this solemn passage from this world to the next depends our eternal destiny. It is, so to speak, the last farewell to life which sets the seal of salvation or reprobation upon all our past years. Omissions at such a time may have eternal and immeasurable consequences. It is when we are least able to resist that we are attacked with the most violence, and exposed to the greatest dangers. Political prudence demands that during a state of peace men should prepare for war;

Christian prudence suggests that during life we should provide ourselves with weapons of defence for the last mortal combat. As in that hour of weakness we shall not be able to bear the weight of heavy armour, we must have protections at hand which constant use has rendered familiar and easy to handle. I therefore put before you simple and consoling reflections likely to rouse your courage and sustain your hopes. The infinite justice of God and the fear of His judgments ought to preserve us during life from temptations dangerous to our salvation; at the hour of death His infinite mercy should be the only consideration we need dwell upon. But what happens is generally the opposite. The enemy of souls tries all our life long to make us take advantage of the Divine mercy by living contentedly in sin, and to ruin ourselves by fatal presumption; at the hour of death he reminds us only of God's justice and the severity of His judgments, that we may be lost in all the terrors of despair. I am therefore going to speak to you only of what should console you at the hour of death, and raise your courage so that you may peacefully commit your souls into the hands of your Creator. Read and meditate upon these things while you are yet in good health; your mind will grasp them better than when the approach of death robs you of the power of concentrated thought.

FIRST MEDITATION.

GOD'S KINDNESS IN GENERAL, A MOTIVE FOR CONFIDENCE.

I.

To accustom our eyes to the light, and lest they be dazzled by suddenly contemplating God's amazing love as exemplified by the Cross, let us first fix them on objects more within our compass, and which do not shine with such blinding brilliance. Afterwards we will raise them to the Cross, thereon to gaze at the Sun of Love in all the brightness of His glory and the fire of His beams.

II.

My soul, look within and search the depths of the heart. If I felt guilty of some secret sin, should I not detest it and confess it sincerely to the ministers Jesus Christ has appointed to absolve me? Should I grudge any amount of regrets or tears to wash it away? No, indeed! If my conscience does not reproach me either with some sinful attachment which I have not severed for the

sake of my salvation, some secret hatred of my neighbour which I have failed to stifle, or some injustice left unrepaired; if my conscience assures me that I love God and my neighbour, then I may be at peace, and need fear neither death nor God's judgments. He can but judge me in accordance with His mercy. He wills to save me, since He Himself inspires me with feelings of repentance and grants me the succour of His Sacraments, the sources of His grace. More men are damned for dying in impenitence and defiance, than for their sins.

III.

However many sins we may have had the misfortune to commit during the course of our lives, if we mingle our tears with the blood of the Lamb which flows into our souls by the Sacraments and washes them away, we need have no fear of appearing before God with the stains of these sins upon us. To die with the Sacraments is to die in the blood of Jesus Christ; no man will be shipwrecked in these saving waters, unless he plunge therein with the treachery of a Judas or the impurity of the deicide Jews.

IV.

Have no fear, O my soul, of being haled before the tribunal of Divine justice. My

repentance, sanctified by the merits of my Saviour, has covered the multitude of my sins; God's justice has turned to mercy towards me; God looks upon me as a slave whom His Son has redeemed at the cost of His life, a conquest snatched from Hell. My salvation is bound up with His own glory. I need fear nothing; He has averted His anger from me, and has poured it out over rebellious peoples, and over souls impervious to repentance or obstinately resolved to die in their sins.

V.

It is only because of our nature that God's justice comes into play; He is essential love and mercy.* Let us weep for our sins of frailty, or, perhaps, of malice. Let us abjure the world which knows us not, let us give up whatever is displeasing to God, and we need have no fear of the rigours of God's justice, which are only intended for those who obstinately persist in rebelling against His grace. Then we can feel that all obstacles in the way of His infinite kindness are removed, and our souls, which we commit into His hands as they leave the prison of our bodies, will pass into the bosom of His mercy and enter into the joy of their Lord. God is all love and kindness, and His love is

* Tertullian, "De resurrectione carnis," Chap. XIV., p. 333 (1675).

shown by giving Himself to us. By His kindness He, in a sense, communicated His being to us when He drew us out of nothingness, and by an effect of the same kindness He wills to share His glory with us. He is Our Father; He prefers that in our prayers we should address Him by this loving Name, than by the dread title of Sovereign Lord (Matt. vi. 9), and what will not a kind father do for the welfare and happiness of his children, even when they have grieved him by their wicked conduct!

VI.

God in His goodness has declared Himself unwilling to punish sinners, and has said that His delight is to do good to all men. He has instilled into the hearts of His saints the same inclination towards kindness and charity, and only recognizes as His children those who try to imitate His charity (Matt. v. 43-48). Then may we not expect God to treat even us miserable sinners as He commands us to treat others? May we not hope He will be kind and compassionate to our infirmities, patient in bearing our affronts, willing to overlook them, and render us good for evil? Will He be less merciful than we should be? No, the great flood of charity He pours into the hearts of His saints is but a tiny rivulet flowing from

the ocean of His infinite mercy. We should have no fears for our salvation if it depended upon the apostolic charity of those men whom God employs in the conversion of sinners. Why, then, should we feel afraid when, at the moment of leaving the world to which we died long ago, we realize that our fate lies in the hands of God Himself ?

SECOND MEDITATION.

THE MERCY OF GOD TOWARDS SINNERS SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO HAVE CONFIDENCE AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

I.

He into Whose hands we commit our souls at the moment of death is a God Whose infinite mercy was made manifest from the beginning of the world, and has never ceased since. From that time onward the human race, loaded with His graces and favours, has continually offended Him; yet He has had pity on men and showed kindness to them. He waited with infinite patience for them to repent; He commands the sun to give them light, and showers them with both heavenly and earthly benefits; if they are lost it is by their own fault and their own deliberate impenitence. Thus we say of God that He is rich in mercy and long-suffering; willing to forgive not one sin, but countless sins; not the sins of one nation only, but those of all nations; not for a time, but for all time. O my soul, my own impenitence

is all I need fear, not the anger of a God willing to pardon, and Whose mercies are infinitely greater than my sins.

II.

So great is the kindness of God to sinners while they are still on earth that He almost seems to put aside His sovereign Majesty and to forgo the rights of His justice the better to exercise His prerogative of mercy. He seems to seek every opportunity to forgive them; promptings of grace, warnings of conscience, appeals, threats, afflictions—all these are employed by God to touch the hearts of men and convert them, and when He succeeds in winning them to Himself He deigns to glory in it. "So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (Luke xv. 10). A sinner is a sheep gone astray, which the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, seeks until He finds it, even though He "leave the ninety and nine in the desert" (Luke xv. 4-6) while He follows it. A repentant sinner is a Prodigal Son whom God, the best of all fathers, receives with lavish kindness, heaping benefits on him and refusing to remember his ingratitude and past misdeeds (Luke xv. 11-32).

III.

When God threatens sinners it is not to condemn them for ever, but to convert them.

The greatest of sinners may, and should trust in God's mercy while there is breath in his body. Jonas did not mistake the loving-kindness of God when he refused to go to Ninive and prophesy the approaching destruction of the city. He well knew that if the wicked Ninivites repented God would hearken to them and revoke His decree condemning them to annihilation (Jonas iv. 1, 2). God's threats and anger are always side by side with His offers of mercy to contrite and humble sinners.

IV.

All through the course of my sinful life God, Whom I have shamelessly offended, has borne with me patiently, waiting for the return of His prodigal son. Instead of casting me out He received me when I returned to Him, and reinstated me in all my privileges as His child. A thousand times have I offended, and a thousand times He has forgiven me. He has spared His handiwork, He has watched over me even while I was yet astray and guarded me as the apple of His eye. His past benefits are a pledge of what I may hope for in the hour of death. I could not sin more deeply now than by refusing to trust Him. He does not will that I should be lost, and, with me, the fruit of so many past years of mercy.

V.

It is God who inspires mothers and foster-mothers with all their tender love for the babes they suckle. It is God Who makes a father kind and loving to his children, willing to make sacrifices for them, and ready to forgive the blackest ingratitude and the most degrading profligacy. How abundant must be the Source of so much kindness! How loving and merciful must be the Heart that pours benefits into so many million hearts! "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider?" (Ps. xciii. 9). He Who created the hearts of parents must surely feel a father's love for all the children He has sent into this world!

VI.

To lighten the burden of our sins and strengthen our trust in the mercy of the Lord, let us remember what multitudes of penitent souls have illustrated the Divine mercy throughout past centuries. The hand of God was heavy on the faithless Israelites; that unstable people forsook the ways of iniquity, and God forgave them. They fell again, and when they stretched out their hands anew to God He raised them. They fell again and again, and God forgave them their many lapses and disloyalties. What love, what mercy, what tireless patience!

When Ninive was doomed to destruction the inhabitants of the wicked city repented, and the Divine decree was revoked. Beautiful is the story of David's repentance—the one-time homicide and adulterer casting his sins from him with loathing and obtaining mercy; while the repentance of Manasses, who bewailed his iniquities with tears during his captivity, shows us how these two great kings prostrated themselves at the feet of God, and disarmed His most signal vengeance ere it could burst upon their heads. Surely these great sinners had no doubts of the Divine forgiveness! God has often told us that the moment sinners repent and turn to Him, He will "cast all our sins in the bottom of the sea" (Isa. xliii. 5; Ezech. xviii. 21, 22; Mic. vii. 19). Can the greatest sinner doubt the mercy of God, and His willingness to receive His creature with kindness, if he reflects upon the strength of God's assurances to His unfaithful people when He urges them to be converted from their evil ways? "It is commonly said: If a man put away his wife and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more . . . but thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers: nevertheless return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee . . ." (Jer. iii. 1). How can the sinner who meditates upon this loving promise refuse to be converted from his sin? And why need a repentant sinner dread the anger of his Lord?

THIRD MEDITATION.

EVEN OUR SINS ARE A MOTIVE FOR CONFIDENCE.

I.

My soul, detest your sins as the greatest evil in the world, yet do not fear them. They are monsters whose fangs have been drawn; Divine mercy has disarmed them, and will turn them to your happiness and triumph. It is to God's honour to forgive you and show you mercy, therefore your sins have been instrumental to His glory. During life they have been a subject of holy penitence, and at death they will show forth the mercy of your Saviour, as the sins of the penitent thief caused it to be manifested on the Cross.

II.

The tears Saint Peter shed were as precious as the sin which caused them was terrible. Nothing could have been more shameless than the life of Mary Magdalen, yet nothing ever rejoiced Our Lord more than her repentance and the tears she shed for her past.

O wonderful goodness of God! What should have caused our ruin, and brought down His hatred and His curse upon our head, becomes a means of salvation and a source of grace and blessing. Only a great physician can turn poison to the uses of healing; only God can turn shame into glory and draw sweetness from the very core of bitterness; only God can make His light to shine amidst the darkest shadows.

III.

If our first father had not sinned, the Son of God would not have become Man to save the human race. *O felix culpa*, which has given such glory to God, and to men such abundance of mercy! Even the most detestable sins may be called "happy" when they have been bitterly bewailed and washed in the blood of the Lamb! A penitent sinner is dearer and more acceptable to God by his humble repentance than he was hateful for all his sins. O my soul, how much I should love and trust God, since He has deigned to turn my offences against Him to His glory, and to bring about my salvation by means of the sins which should have brought down His anger on my head and dragged me into Hell!

IV.

Would that all the stars of the firmament were so many tongues to sing the mercies of

my God throughout the ages! May the angels join their voices to mine, and strengthen my weak efforts to thank Him worthily for His infinite goodness! God has disarmed His justice and has raised me on to the stepping-stones of my dead sins.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

THE SOUL'S DIGNITY A MOTIVE FOR CONFIDENCE.

I.

CONSIDER, my soul, the nobility of your origin, and respect it accordingly. I came from the bosom of God; He is my Father, and has told me to call Him by that loving name: "Our Father Who art in Heaven" (Matt. vi. 9). Can a father forget his child? God bears us in the bowels of His compassion like the tenderest of mothers; He Himself says: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee . . ." (Isa. xlix. 15). However degraded I may become through sin, God will never refuse to acknowledge me as His handiwork and as His child; He will always see in me the image of His Godhead, and always long to restore my soul to its original beauty and reinstate me in the privileges I have forfeited by my sins.

II.

Although it is purely out of His great goodness that God loves us at all, we may say that He loves Himself in us: His love for us is but the overflow of His infinite love of Himself. Our souls which He created in His image are, so to speak, fragments of His Divinity. How should He not love what touches Him so nearly? Sin, it is true, distorts the Divine likeness within us; but repentance, sanctified by the blood of Jesus, retraces its almost obliterated outlines. Our souls, beautified by the grace of the world's Redeemer, are temples in which God deigns to dwell, and in which He Himself has told us it is His delight to converse; sanctuaries to be venerated as the habitation of the Holy Ghost. Even our bodies are sanctified by the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ; consecrated by contact with our souls, they become vessels dedicated to the Divine Majesty, and as such cannot be profaned without terrible sacrilege, nor without entailing, as Saint Paul warns us, God's wrath on the offender (Prov. viii. 31; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16).

III.

It is quite certain that, however unworthy we may be, God cannot hold us lightly. At a supreme moment in the councils of Heaven

the Three Divine Persons formed us, and our souls are the breath of the Godhead. "Let us make man," said the Lord, "to our image and likeness . . ." (Gen. i. 26). After creating the world of matter, He willed to make man a compendium of His wonderful work. Can God, Who is all goodness, wish to destroy and lose all that He created, seemingly with so much satisfaction? Do mothers cast their children into the flames, or rend their limbs asunder? Why are you troubled, O my soul, at the sight of your sins and the expectation of God's judgments? Whatever their number and enormity, I may take courage if I sincerely detest them; my only fear should be lest I despair of God's mercy. My Judge is my God, my Creator, my Father; He does not will that His work should be wasted; He will not cast His child into the flames; He longs for my salvation more than I do myself.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

WE SHOULD HAVE GREAT CONFIDENCE IN GOD WHEN WE REMEMBER THAT HE GAVE HIS OWN SON AS A GIFT TO THE WORLD.

I.

"For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son . . . (John iii. 16). And to what a world! A world opposed to Him, and whose sins were abominable in the sight of His infinite sanctity. He sent His own Son to save this world of sinners, to take all their sins upon Himself and expiate them as if He were the sole offender. What have we to fear from the anger of God, after He Himself has quenched it in the blood of His Son? If we detest our sins and do penance for them, why need we fear their effects, after Jesus Christ Himself has deigned to expiate them and apply the merits of His Precious Blood to us who have no merits of our own?

II.

God willed that His Son should become Man, that He might love all men in Him,

since they of themselves had nothing to recommend them in God's sight. He loves Jesus Christ, His only Son, with a love that is infinite and unique, and Our Saviour being the Head of the human race and the First-born among men, God loves mankind in Him and for His sake. Thus God loves us with the same love He bears His Son, the love wherewith He loves Himself. So long as we are in union with Jesus Christ, as weak members united to their Head, God will have pity on us and love us, if not for ourselves in our degradation, at least for the sake of His Beloved Son, Whose merits we share.

III.

God willed that His only Son should be the world's Redeemer, that He might be justified in forgiving men and overlooking their offences. A penitent sinner is covered with the Blood of Jesus Christ, clothed with His Merits, and safeguarded by His Cross. Would God send to perdition those whom Jesus Christ has saved, and refuse to show them the mercy which has cost His Son so dear?

IV.

God so loved men that to rescue them from the abyss of sin He willed that in Jesus Christ should dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally" (Col. ii. 9), and that

Our Lord should be Man as well as God. God, Who is so jealous of His glory, willed this that sinful man might have, in Jesus Christ, a Mediator and a Saviour worthy or Himself, and that this Divine Saviour might be the principle of salvation to all, the source of their holiness, and the basis of all theif hopes.

V.

God, having sent His Son on earth, would seem to have forgotten His Divine Sonship and given all His love to men and all His care to their salvation. To save them from everlasting death He condemned His Son, from His birth, to death. He willed that Our Lord's life should be spent in teaching them, and showing them an example of all the virtues. He willed that to save men and free them from the bondage of sin Our Lord should be throughout His life their Master, their Model, and their Servant. O my soul, I will cast myself with Magdalen the Sinner at my Saviour's feet, I need not fear even to throw myself into His arms and, like His well-beloved disciple, rest upon His heart. In the abode of His glory He is still as merciful and kind as when He was on earth.

VI.

God was not content with sending His Son on earth and ordaining that He should spend

His whole life in the work of salvation; He went still further, and condemned Jesus Christ to die, that He might gain eternal life for all men. He sent Him from the bosom of the Godhead into the hands of His executioners. He willed that He should consummate His sacrifice on the altar of the Cross, and become the expiatory victim of our sins. The Son of God, in His mortal agony, asked His Father to let the Cup pass from Him, but the prayer was not granted. It would almost seem as if God had loved us better than His Son. Surely He will not love us less in the hour of death, when the precious fruits of Our Lord's sacrifice for our salvation are ripe for the gathering ?

VII.

Jesus Christ, having acquired infinite merits by His death upon the Cross, God His Father, to Whom Our Lord offered the sacrifice of His life for our sake, incorporated us in His Son, making Him our Head, that, being members of His only Son, we should become the children of God in and through Jesus Christ. "For which cause He was not ashamed to call them brethren . . . heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. viii. 17, 29; Heb. ii. 11). We have a share in all the riches of His merits. In my own nature I am poor and miserable, but

in Jesus Christ I am rich. His tears, His prayers, His sufferings, His merits are all mine. O wonderful invention of Divine goodness! Since we could not all become gods, we have been made participators in the treasures of the Godhead; and God, as Saint Paul says, having given us His Son, "hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

VIII.

Baptism and belief in Jesus Christ unite us to God as His children, the Sacraments incorporate us into the Body of His well-beloved Son. O my soul, I am happy enough to have received the gift of faith; I have been baptized in the blood of Jesus Christ; I belong to Him and have a share in His merits; therefore I can confidently say that, in spite of my unworthiness, I deserve to obtain all things, and all are mine in and through Jesus Christ. O my God, would I possessed a million hearts to love You as You deserve to be loved!

IX.

Loving and most merciful Father, one heart is not enough to return You even part of the love You showed me by giving me Your Son! You willed that He should devote His whole life to the salvation of men. During His stay on earth He showed Him-

self less their Master than their Servant. He sought them; He went to meet them half-way; He cured their diseases; He washed their feet; He died for them. For them He rose again, and ascended into Heaven to prepare a place for them there. He does not forget them in the land of their exile; for their sakes He still pours out His blood and His infinite merits through the channel of the Sacraments. O prodigy of mercy and love! words fail me, thoughts and mind are overwhelmed! O love and goodness! that is my only cry! To my life's end I will never cease to hope in God!

X.

Yes, I will hope in the mercies of my Saviour, even if I have already one foot in Hell. If God had meant me to be lost would He have incorporated me in His Son? Would He have commanded me to frequent the Sacraments, whose property it is to transform me into His Son? By condemning me, He would number His own Son among the reprobate. By sentencing me to perdition, He would render naught the Redemption and the greatest work of His mercy. I will fear nothing, so long as I put my faith and trust in Him and cling to His Cross. Nothing shall separate me from the love of Jesus Christ.

XI.

If God does not save us out of love for ourselves (we who have deserved the severest measure of His justice), He will save us for love of His Son, Who bore the burden of our iniquities. He owes Our Lord a recompense for His obedience; that recompense is the salvation of those who believe in Him. That was all that Jesus asked for, when He offered up His blood and His life. God cannot let us be lost without destroying the heritage for which His Son's blood was shed, without belittling the power of the Cross, without rending asunder the members of the adorable Body of Christ. Our Divine Saviour cannot condemn sinners without doing violence to His mercy. Unhappy is the father who must needs pass sentence on his own son. I will hope in the goodness of God: He Who gave me so kind a Saviour will not suffer anything to separate me from Him.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE MAJESTY OF JESUS CHRIST A GROUND FOR HOPE.

I.

THE more we realize the sovereign excellence and greatness of our Saviour and our Head, the stronger will become our faith in the efficacy of the Atonement by which He became "the Lamb of God . . . Who taketh away the sin of the world . . ." (John i. 29).

II.

Jesus Christ, in Whom God and Man are so wonderfully united, Whom God promised to the world from the beginning, was given to mankind in the fulness of time. All the ages were created for Him. The centuries preceding Him prepared the way for His First Advent; those which follow prepare the glory of that eternal empire which He is to exercise over all creatures at His Second Coming. Before His birth He was the hope of prophets and patriarchs; at His birth He

sowed in His Church the seeds of a people of saints; since His death He is "above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come . . ." (Eph. i. 21-23).

III.

For Jesus Christ were all things made. God created men solely that His Son might have subjects under His empire for ever. O my soul, my Saviour, Man as I am, is truly God; the sovereign Lord I must adore, the all-powerful God on Whom depends my very being and my salvation. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. ii. 6). "For to which of the angels hath He said at any time, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten thee?" (Heb. i. 5). "*Sede a dextris meis*" (Ps. cix. 3). O Jesus, if You were God and nothing less, I should fear to be overwhelmed by Your Sovereign Majesty; but You are God-made-Man, equal to God, yet made in my likeness. This adorable equality and this wonderful resemblance encourage me to put all my trust in You.

IV.

Jesus Christ, united to the Divine Nature, is a Man "appointed King" over all crea-

tion . . . and all things are "subject under His feet. . . ." He is "King of Kings," "King of the Princes of the earth," "Lord of Lords . . ." and "Judge of the living and of the dead . . ." (Ps. ii. 6, 8; viii. 8; Acts x. 42; Eph. i. 17-23; 1 Tim. vi. 15; Heb. i. 2; Apoc. i. 5; xix. 16).

God wields His omnipotence by the hand of Jesus Christ; through the mouth of Jesus He pardons or condemns, and on Jesus alone depends our eternal destiny. Our Judge is our Saviour and our Brother; it is easy for the greatest of sinners to melt His Heart and obtain a merciful sentence; His greatest glory is to forgive, for He has shed His blood to wash away the sins of the world!

V.

Though Jesus Christ is equal to God, He was subservient to Him in one part of His nature, and was not exempt from the universal precept of obedience. Therefore "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross . . ." (Phil. ii. 8). Such obedience truly glorifies God and is infinitely more precious than that of all creation put together; it means that God-made-Man obeys His equal, God. Such obedience is of infinite price to us, and we must strive to share in the merit of it, for it was as Head of the human race, and in

the name of all men, that Our Lord obeyed God, His Father. It will be imputed to us if we submit, with Jesus Christ, to the sovereignty of God; and if we die to sin, as He died to expiate our iniquities.

VI.

How astounding is the mystery of the incarnation of God! how marvellous are the treasures it has gained for human nature! In this mystery man is absolutely subject to God's sovereign authority, and offers a sacrifice worthy of Divine acceptance, while God raises man to His own level by communicating to him the Godhead Itself. O man, learn by the obedience and the humility of Jesus Christ, that though no man may share the sovereign power of God, yet, if you obey Him, He will raise you to His level, and, as a member of the body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, you are "made partaker of the Divine Nature . . . " (2 Pet. i. 4), and have a share in the merits of His Son. O my soul, I must obey the Lord; He will forgive me all my sins and receive me into His glory, through the merits of His Son, which I may claim as mine.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE SAME SUBJECT, CONTINUED.

I.

When we approach the presence of an earthly king we are struck by his external majesty only, and by the proud expression of his countenance; we cannot see his soul, and we forget it, so taken up are we with the exterior trappings of his great estate. Yet it is to his sacred person that all the homage paid to him is offered. Therefore God, in order to accommodate Himself to our weakness, and allow us to behold in corporeal form that Sovereign Majesty which "inhabiteth light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 6), vouchsafed to become man. In worshipping Jesus Christ, His body and His soul, it is God Whom we adore; in loving Him we love God. O my soul, let nothing separate you from Jesus Christ. He is as truly God as He is our Brother and our Saviour. If the pure majesty of God is too dazzling for my eyes, I can contemplate, adore, and worship Him in the person of my Saviour, Who is One with Him.

II.

Let us look at the soul of Jesus Christ, that boundless realm of light. It is holy with the holiness of God Himself; there we shall find treasures of grace and wisdom, kindness, mercy, and an infinite love. Why did God heap up so many treasures in the soul of His Son, if not that His faithful worshippers might share them? Our Divine Saviour invites us to come to Him for succour under all our trials. He tells us that in His Heart we shall find mercy and forgiveness of sin, holiness, love of God, and a precious pledge of our predestination. The greatest motive for love and confidence in Jesus Christ is that, having purchased by His death all the graces obtainable, He has the absolute disposal of them. He it is Who makes men saints, Who sustains the weaker brethren, Who converts sinners. As there is no salvation save through Jesus, we must set all our hopes on Him. He is the Source of all the graces which Heaven sends on earth, and I need not be dismayed, even at the thought of my sins, when I remember that to those who believe in Him, even the greatest of sinners, if they will invoke His Name and wash away their iniquities in the blood from His wounds, He is the Author of Salvation.

III.

God said of old " . . . Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm . . ." (Jer. xvii. 5). They only are accounted blessed now who put their trust in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and all their hope in the wounds of our Divine Saviour. The order of Divine Providence is indeed changed: God is no longer jealous that a Man should share His power and His glory. Not only did the Almighty shed His wisdom and His power on Jesus Christ as He has done on others, but He communicated His very Nature to Our Lord, that He might become not merely the channel, but the Source Itself, of all good and of all sanctity. Therefore we should worship Jesus Christ in His Sacred Humanity with the same homage that we pay to God our Sovereign Lord, for it is the body of the Very God. Since God so loved us as to send His only Son to be sacrificed for us and bear the burden of our iniquities, we should put all our trust in Him. If we have recourse to Him as the Physician of our sin-laden souls, if we call upon His Holy Name with faith, if we cast ourselves into His arms when we render up our souls into His keeping, we know that He will have mercy on us. He

will receive us into Heaven, there to dwell with Him; and having freed us for ever from the bondage of Hell, He will suffer us to fulfil the end of our creation, and glorify Him eternally.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

WE SHOULD CONSTANTLY PUT OURSELVES IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

GOD has given us, in Jesus Christ, an easy way of access to His Infinite Majesty, which no longer inhabits realms of distant and unapproachable light. It is easy for us, if we choose, to contemplate the greatness of Jesus, which is that of God Himself, hidden beneath the veils of His Humanity. Such contemplation is within the scope of our feeble imagination; our thoughts can reach, if they cannot grasp it. We are contemplating our God, but as a Man like ourselves: "That which was from the beginning," says Saint John, "which we . . . have seen with our eyes . . . which our hands have handled" (1 John i. 1). We are not asked to raise our thoughts to an invisible Majesty. In thinking of a Man we think of our God, in speaking to a Man we speak to our God, and it is the love and worship of His Sacred Humanity which raises us to the love and worship of His Divinity.

II.

This access to God is made easy and sweet to us because Jesus is our Brother, and became our Brother for love of us. How this fraternity tempers the full blaze of the dread Majesty of God! Oh, the folly of men who seek their pleasure in frivolous conversation, and in all the vain joys and distractions of this world! How much more solid would be the foundation of their happiness if they would converse with Jesus Christ by meditating on His greatness and His mercy, raising their hearts through Him to the contemplation of the Divine Majesty to which He is so closely united, and beginning, while still on earth, to lead the lives of saints in Heaven!

III.

What consolations we should find if we would have recourse to Jesus, the Saviour and Physician of our souls! What lights we should receive if we would give ear to His teaching and to the words of life which come from His Divine lips! If His "delights were to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31), how much greater must be the delight of those with whom He deigns to converse! O my soul, Jesus is the Source of all good and all consolation; He gives

Himself to me in the Sacrament of His love, He nourishes me with His Flesh and Blood; He loves me with such excess that He wills to transform me into Himself: why, then, am I not overwhelmed with the sweetness of His love? I will give myself to Him, as He gives Himself to me, and all my delight shall be to be with Him, as His is to be with me.

IV.

Who would not feel his heart burn with love at the thought that Jesus Christ dies, so to speak, again for us, every time our sins are forgiven us, and that to quench the fires of Hell, which were lit for our punishment, we need but to bathe in His blood! O infinite Goodness, O incomprehensible power of the Blood of the Lamb! To apply His merits to my soul and wash away my sins, it is enough to have faith, trust, and love, it is enough to kiss His wounds and mingle my tears with His blood. Alas! how can we, the heirs to the riches of Jesus Christ, covet perishable wealth? How vile, how base, how unworthy of a Christian, to whom Jesus Christ offers a share of all His treasures and His merits! Unhappy that we are, who has so corrupted us? How comes it that we have degenerated so shamelessly from the spirit of the early Christians, who desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and thought all else unworthy of them?

V.

Why do we not give Jesus Christ the same love as Magdalen, who loved her Divine Master the more for being a great sinner, and was loved in return in pity for her sins? Our sins, instead of causing us to despair, should be a greater motive for loving Jesus Christ and trusting in Him. Why do we not love Our Lord like Saint Paul, who could not live without Him, "having a desire to be dissolved and be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23), and who said, "If any man love not Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22)? Why do we not love Him like Saint Ignatius, who gloried in having the Name of Jesus graven on his heart, and incited wild beasts to trample him that he might become the wheat of the Lord?* Why do we not love Him like the many noble martyrs who have shed their blood for the glory of His Name, the many confessors and holy virgins who only lived for Him and whose only delight during their life on earth was to put themselves into His presence?

* "Hieronym, "De Scriptoribus Eccl.," Chap. XVI., App. vol. iv, p. ii., Col. 108. (1706.)

NINTH MEDITATION.

THE VALUE OF THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST: WHAT IT MEANS TO PRAY IN HIS NAME.

I.

THE first essential in praying rightly is a fervent longing for the graces we pray for. The desire to receive, will open our hearts until they become fit receptacles for Divine favours. Then we must have a true idea of the omnipotence of God, and believe that He can do infinitely more than we either desire or ask of Him; and furthermore we must put entire trust in His goodness and His infinite mercy. Even all these dispositions are not enough, since the Son of God, by His Incarnation, has become our Saviour and our Head. If in our prayers we stop short at trust in God's mercy and power, without asking other help, we shall not be heard. What more must we do?

II.

The secret of obtaining all we ask of God, and the surest way to obtain it, is to pray not in our name, but in that of Jesus Christ.

When we pray rightly it is Jesus Christ, our Head, Who prays in and for us, and it is only through His merits that our prayers are ever granted. If we trust solely in the Merits of Jesus Christ, and pray only in His Name, we may be quite sure that, according to His own promise, we shall obtain what we ask.

III.

We must not doubt God's willingness to grant our prayer if we ask with confidence in the infinite mercy of God, and through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, Who acquired them only for our sake. God wills to do honour to His Son, Whose obedience so glorified His Father. In order that we may be obliged to put all our trust in our Lord, God will only grant our prayers in and through Him. The graces we receive from God are, so to speak, our Lord's due. God means us to understand that in showering us with benefits He is only rendering to His Son what He merited for our sakes.

IV.

"God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16) to save it, and He "so loves" His Son that He will grant nothing to the world save in His Son's Name and through His merits. He wills that we should constantly remind Him of

them—not that He could forget, but lest we should, and as our acknowledgment that our Saviour bought with His blood all the graces we ask of God in His Name. That we may know the true value of these Divine graces God willed that His only Son should gain them for us, and He will only give them to us in proportion to the merits of Christ. Precious, indeed, must be Divine grace, for it is the price of the blood of God-made-Man! But we know we can obtain it; we even have a right to ask it of God's justice if not of His mercy, for Jesus Christ has paid this price!

V.

We must not imagine that to be baptized and to believe in Jesus Christ is all we need do to obtain the necessary graces; we must pray, and pray in His Name. Baptism makes us His members; Faith unites us to Him; prayer puts us in communication with Him, and brings us within the influence of His merits, which He shed His blood to obtain for us. Prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ binds us yet more closely to Him, and draws us yet nearer to the Source of Grace. This source is infinite: the deeper we drink of it, the more remains; the more we ask, the more we shall receive; and the saving waters from our Saviour's wounds will wash us ever more and more from our sins.

VI.

Those who are most diligent in uniting themselves in prayer to Jesus Christ are in a special sense heirs to His merits; they drink perpetually of that stream which flows for all who seek its waters. The chief characteristics of the saints are this holy emulation in uniting themselves closely to Jesus Christ by prayer, and their nearness to their Divine Head. Their greatest joy is to bear about them the Cross of Jesus in their heart and on their person. Their only conversation is of Him; He is their only thought, their only love. He is the subject of their meditation by day and of their dreams by night. They lament and pine away whenever they find themselves cut off from contact with Jesus Christ, and can find no traces of His blood. Always present to their souls are the words of Jesus: "We ought always to pray and faint not" (Luke xviii. 1); "if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (John xvi. 23); and those of Saint Paul: "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh" (Rom. viii. 1).

TENTH MEDITATION.

ALL CHRISTIANS DO NOT HAVE AN EQUAL SHARE IN THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

In the order of grace, as of nature, there are rich as well as poor, fortunate as well as unfortunate. There are souls so closely united to Jesus Christ, and so diligent in cultivating the graces which He continually gives them, that they are rich and abound in good works. They can say of themselves: "And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). This was Saint Peter's meaning when he said that we have a "hidden man of the heart . . . rich in the sight of God" (1 Pet. iii. 4). Rich in the treasures of Jesus Christ Himself, the merits of His blood, which He pours into our souls. The Apostle tells us that "His grace in me hath not been void" (1 Cor. xv. 10), for Our Lord watered the precious seed with His blood. Oh, how our riches would increase if we lived only by the spirit of Jesus Christ!

II.

On the other hand there are impoverished, arid souls, without merit, and doing no work for God; souls who in their self-indulgence bury the precious talents of Jesus Christ, souls who waste the fruit of all His merits in frivolity and profligacy, souls who stifle the inspirations of the Holy Ghost beneath the follies of vanity or the pressure of worldly interests. Such souls are the scum of the populace in Jesus Christ's Kingdom, the refuse and the shame of Christendom. Their wretched state deserves more indignation than compassion, since it is due to their own fault and negligence alone.

III.

The greatest impediments to the service of God, corruption, profligacy, and the more serious forms of sin, are more generally to be found in high places and among the rich than among the middle classes. Those who appear poorest and most miserable in the sight of God are generally the rich and the great of this world; those whom Jesus Christ enriches with His grace are usually living in a state of poverty, or at any rate in modest circumstances, quite forgotten and overlooked by their fellow-men. The Saviour of the world says that He came "to preach the Gospel to the poor" (Luke iv. 18), and

that they only are blessed who, if not poor in worldly means, at least are "poor in spirit" (Matt. v. 3). What changes we should see if God were to deal with men according to His justice during this life! Those whom the world courts would be in disgrace, and the despised in glory. God allows this apparent contradiction for the sanctification of His elect. A day will come when the worldly shall be covered with shame, and Jesus Christ's poor, who are truly the children of God, shall rejoice in the glory they have deserved.

IV.

Woe to those who are led by another spirit than that of Jesus, and who put their trust in anything but His merits and the power of the Cross. They are rich in temporal wealth, which cannot bring them happiness, but their soul is stripped of all good. Men applaud them, but God looks upon them with anger, as squanderers of the merits of His Son, destroyers of His Vineyard, and enemies of His Cross. By giving themselves up to their shameless passions, they trample underfoot the Precious Blood which Our Saviour shed to wash away their sins; and that which in the designs of His Divine mercy should have been their salvation, turns to their eternal reprobation.

V.

Ailments generally result from poverty and privations. If we could look into the souls of worldly men who hate the Cross of Christ, we should see nothing but ulcers, wounds, and incurable diseases; their minds are coarse and prejudiced, they are incapable of appreciating anything which does not appeal to the senses, and they think it folly to concern themselves about the Cross of Jesus, the service of God, or their eternal salvation. Solomon spoke truly indeed when he said that the service of God is abhorred by the impious man. It is a service of humility, and they are a mass of pride. It is a service of mortification, and they are slaves to the most shameless lusts. It is a service of faith and prayer, and they spend their days in dissipation, and amidst the reckless pleasures of this world.

VI.

Yet the blood of Our Saviour is still flowing, and calling down mercy on the most hardened sinners. If they will repent and do penance they shall live. The merits of this Precious Blood are communicated to us in proportion to our faith and our humility. As It enriches ever more and more those It has already sanctified, so It

frees from their bondage sinners, however guilty, who turn sincerely to God. It cleanses them from all their iniquities, sanctifies them, and gives them a right to share the inheritance of the children of God. May sinners, therefore, have recourse to the wounds of Jesus Christ, and may all those who have had the joy of finding salvation there, cling ever closer and closer to Him, that they may be sanctified more and more.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE RESULTS WHICH THE GRACE AND THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST SHOULD PRODUCE IN US.

I.

If we would realize the abundance of the graces God sheds on the world for the sake of His Son's merits, we should remind ourselves how the patriarchs and the prophets were continually longing for the Messiah, and imploring Him to appear. "Drop down dew, ye Heavens, from above," cries out Isaias, "and let the clouds rain the Just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour, and let justice spring up together" (Isa. xlv. 8). Thenceforward these holy men, by their desires and the disposition of their souls, became partakers in the merits of Our Saviour. We remember how, at the birth of the Messiah, angels and men, rich and poor, shepherds and kings, paid homage to Him, and became Princes in the Church He was to sanctify by the merits of His blood. And we should never forget how, after Our Saviour's death, God opened the

treasury of His graces, shedding them abundantly over all those whom His Son had freed from bondage and ransomed by His blood.

II.

These thoughts will help us to remember that God granted His graces to the world solely for the sake of His Son's merits. Let us, with the patriarchs, raise our hearts at break of day to Jesus, and say to Him: O my Saviour, come into my heart as the gentle dew, bud in my soul as the green shoot which bears the Seed of Salvation, for without You my soul is parched and my heart a barren soil !

III.

Let us at evening remember that all our good deeds during the day, all the virtues we have tried to practise, come to us from the Precious Blood shed upon the Cross. It was Your failing powers, Your mortal weariness, Your dying agony, which gave us our strength, dear Lord ! we should exclaim; may all the angels bless You for it for ever !

IV.

Jesus Christ gives us His grace solely to help us to conquer ourselves, to resist sin, and to practise the virtues He taught us; and Saint Paul tells us that the Jews, who

lived as yet only in the anticipation of those laws of grace which we are happy enough to possess, were " without God in the world " (Eph. ii. 11, 12). How faithful we should be to the graces which Jesus Christ gives us so abundantly ! We should strive to make the utmost use of the strength He gives us, our actions should be worthy the help He vouchsafes to us, and we should show ourselves in all things true children of God, brethren and co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

V.

Our greatest incentive and happiness should be the knowledge that all the graces and lights we get from above are given us by Jesus Christ, and through His merits. They are the precious fruits of the blood He shed for us; they are given to us only in order that we may become like to Our Lord Who died for us, and that we may die to self and mortify our passions. " For you are dead," says Saint Paul, " and your life is hid with Christ in God " (Col. iii. 3).

VI.

As the children of the old Adam, to whom he bequeathed his corruptions, our natural life must needs be corrupt and vicious, but Jesus Christ, the new Adam, having given

us His spirit, our life should be supernatural as His was, and our words and actions modelled upon His. Following His example, we must be meek and humble of heart, patient, mortified, full of zeal and charity. This is what Saint Paul means when he says, " Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin, death: and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned. . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned through one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ. . . . For as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one many shall be made just. . . . The first man, Adam, was made into a living soul, the last Adam into a quickening spirit. . . . Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear the image of the heavenly " (Rom. v. 12-21; 1 Cor. xv. 45-49). " My little children," says Saint Paul elsewhere, " of whom I am in labour again until Christ be formed in you " (Gal. iv. 19).

VII.

Mortification should be our chief point of resemblance to Jesus Christ, because by His death He begot us and gave us spirit and life. Our life, if it is to resemble its

Source, should be one of perpetual mortification and of daily dying to self. We should typify in ourselves the humiliations and privations which the Majesty of God was willing to endure by being born in a stable and dying on a gibbet. The true disciple of Jesus Christ daily denies himself and carries his cross. Our Lord Himself bade us do so before He allowed Himself to be nailed to His, to die thereon for us. It was not so much to quench the fires of Hell that Jesus Christ shed His blood as to retrace in our souls the image of God which sin had effaced; and it is only by dying to sin, and by crucifying the flesh with its sinful lusts, that we can become true disciples, brethren, and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, and be transformed into His likeness upon earth.

VIII.

Is it not pitiable folly and monstrous ingratitude for so many Christians, regenerated by the blood of Jesus Christ, to stifle the Divine Spirit He has sent into their souls and to prefer the darkness to the light which shines all about them? They are Christians, yet they live no better lives than infidels or idolaters. Where are those who lead the interior, spiritual life, mortifying their senses and crucifying their evil passions on the Cross of Jesus, stifling in their hearts

the spirit of worldliness, pleasure and vanity, avarice and lust? Where are those who live hidden in God with Christ Jesus, endeavouring to imprint the likeness of God on their souls by the Precious Blood of their Saviour? Sinners, who are still unhappy enough to be enthralled by "the bewitchment of trifling," there is still time to set up once more in your hearts that Divine image which the world and its passions have destroyed! Jesus Crucified still holds out His arms to you; throw yourselves into them with confidence, receive His blood with a contrite and humble heart; and He will let you hear again the words He spoke before His death to the penitent thief, whose life had been, perhaps, no worse than yours.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE FULNESS OF OUR REDEMPTION.

I.

It was a great mystery that, after the death of Jesus Christ, blood and water came out of His side (John xix. 34). This was to teach us that the Blood of Our Saviour remained in His Church after His death, and that He poured it into His Sacraments as a priceless and inexhaustible treasure. Causes which produce effects in the natural order cease to operate when they cease to exist; but the death of Jesus Christ, Who rose from the dead to die no more, had the same effect as if at each subsequent moment of time He died again. His death is an ever-present fact to us. His blood, when He shed it upon the Cross, was the expiation of all past sins, as well as of all those committed since, or which may be committed to the end of time, if penitent sinners will only have recourse to His Divine mercy, and with fullest trust will cast themselves into the saving waters of His Precious Blood.

II.

The Scriptures are full of assurances that the sins of the world can only be forgiven by the power of Jesus Christ's blood. "Know you not," says Saint Paul, "that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death?" (Rom. vi. 3)—that is to say, in His blood. "The spotless Lamb had to be slaughtered, that His blood might cleanse us from our sins." The same Apostle tells us that it is in the Son of God that we have "redemption through His blood, the remission of sins" (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14). He blotted out the "handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same away, fastening it to His Cross" (Col. ii. 14). "Behold the Lamb of God," says Saint John, "behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), "Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5). "For there is no other name under Heaven given to men," says Saint Peter, "whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

III.

It would be an insult to the Passion of Jesus Christ to think His blood was shed to cleanse the world from original sin only,

that it is only efficacious to us in baptism, and that we have nothing to hope from it if unhappily we profane our character as Christians and children of God by repeated sins. The Divine efficacy of the Precious Blood is inexhaustible; Jesus Christ, a priest for ever, offers to God unceasingly the sacrifice of the Cross for the remission of all our sins. He is both priest and victim, and His intercession never ceases. Whatever our guilt in the past, or however many times we may fall after absolution, whenever we repent and carry our sins to the foot of the Cross Our Lord's wounds are always open, and His blood ready to be poured out upon us. The most striking proof of God's readiness to forgive us anything for His Son's sake, is that Jesus Christ granted to men themselves the power to remit sin, and established on earth a tribunal of mercy where no limit is set to the prerogatives of His ministers. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth," He says to them, "it shall be loosed also in Heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19); "Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven" (John xx. 23). Jesus Christ has given Divine authority to men; He employs mediators as weak and sinful as we ourselves, and commands them to absolve us, "not . . . till seventy times, but till seventy times seven times" (Matt. xviii. 22), as often as we heartily detest our sins and resolutely

turn aside from the paths of iniquity to seek Divine mercy. O my God, how easy You have made it to be once more in a state of grace ! Guilty sinner though I be, I can be absolved by the words of a man, and forgiven for sins which an eternity of punishment in Hell could not expiate. We can forgive injuries done to us, but who is to forgive the wrong we do to others ? God shows us more kindness than men show each other, He gives men themselves the power to remit the offences which the vilest sinners are perpetually committing against Him. Could He give us greater proof of the infinite and superabundant efficacy of the Atonement of His Son, Our Saviour ? Another motive of confidence for the greatest sinners is that Our Lord is quite as much glorified by forgiveness of sins as by the redemption of mankind. When we turn aside from our evil ways and repent, we do honour to the merits of our Saviour, we are no longer the cause of His Precious Blood being shed in vain, and we procure Him the triumph and the glory He bought so dearly when He died for us. Desperate diseases bring honour on the physician who can cure them. Repentance turns the greatest of sins to Our Saviour's greater glory, and makes His Prodigal Son the dearest of His children.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

OUR REDEMPTION IS ABUNDANT, BUT IT IS THE GREATEST CALAMITY TO ABUSE IT.

I.

To realize the fruitfulness of Christ's redemption, let us consider what passes in a sinful soul which gains eternal life by the death of Our Saviour. I have fallen into sin, I am guilty in the sight of God; I must either perish eternally, or Jesus Christ must die for me and redeem me by His blood; for, as Saint Peter tells us, "there is no other name . . . whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12), and it is His blood alone which has power to cleanse us from our sins. What is my wretched soul to do, torn between hopes and fears? I cling to the Cross of Jesus; He gives Himself for me, He dies, He offers once again for me the sacrifice of His blood, and my soul is snatched from the brink of Hell's yawning abyss; my sins are wiped out, and God restores me to His grace and favour.

II.

If I faithfully preserve the treasure Jesus Christ acquired for me at the cost of His life, it would seem that Our Divine Saviour may rejoice in His conquest. But if I fall away and relapse, if I forsake God anew and go back to my evil ways, my soul is indeed in danger, and my salvation well-nigh hopeless. Jesus Christ had given His life for my redemption, but my repeated sins have nullified the power of His death, they have made His merits of no avail, and destroyed the fruits of His redemption. My faithless soul is once more on the brink of perdition; which way shall I turn? If I throw myself at God's feet, bowed down with the weight of my iniquities, what can I say to Him? O my God, I have lost my Saviour; what is to become of me, if You will not send Him back to me? I have trampled His blood under foot; what is to become of me, if You will not shed it again to cleanse me afresh? If the blood of Abel cried to Heaven for vengeance and was heard, shall God be deaf to His Son's blood, which the sinner wantonly tramples under foot every time he yields to sin?

III.

But if instead of incurring the eternal malediction, the sinner repents again and does

penance, the death of Jesus Christ becomes once more his pledge of life; Our Divine Saviour, Whose mercy is inexhaustible and Whose Atonement is sufficient to expiate an infinity of sins, opens His wounds once more to take in the humble and contrite sinner and wash him in His blood. Saint Paul is thinking of these repeated falls and repentances when he says that some "are fallen away to be renewed to penance, crucifying again in themselves the Son of God" (Heb. vi. 6). We crucify Him when we fall back into sin, because He was nailed to the Cross to punish sin; we crucify Him afresh when our repentance takes us to His Cross, for in order to reconcile us to God He must reopen His wounds and shed His blood; He must die, as it were, once more. He reproaches us bitterly for this in the prophetic Psalms: "They have added to the grief of My wounds" (Ps. lxviii. 27).

IV.

Thus Jesus Christ, when He converts a sinner who has already many times been pardoned by His merits, redeems him yet again, and expiates again by the shedding of His blood, the fresh offences which the sinner has committed. O Jesus, cries the sinner received into grace after so much backsliding, O my Saviour, how often have

You saved me! Redeemer of my past, Redeemer of my soul to-day! Never can I forget Your goodness to me in the past as in the present; what You have done for me now will never be forgotten, and I will die a thousand deaths rather than forfeit the precious fruits of my redemption by another sin!

V.

What are the thoughts of a soul reflecting on the fatal causes which have corrupted its innocence? O my God, the fatal beauty which entangled and poisoned me, the vain pomp of riches, the world's empty honours, all these are but treacherous phantoms in my path, deadly snares by which the devil and the world have tried to bring me to perdition. Never will I allow myself to be enslaved again; never shall my ingratitude crucify Jesus Christ afresh, and force Him to shed His blood again to wipe out my repeated sins!

VI.

And lastly, the habitual sinner must beware of sacrilegious presumption in believing that the more sins he commits the more ready will Our Lord be to obliterate them by His blood. If he be ungrateful enough to abuse God's clemency, at least he need not add to his ingratitude the folly of thinking he can go on piling up sin upon sin because God's

goodness and the merits of Jesus Christ are infinite. Our Lord will not save all the sinners for whom He died, but only those who truly repent; His blood will cry for vengeance on those who have profaned it by unrepented sin, and will be upon the heads of the wicked, as on the impenitent and hardened Jews. The Saviour of the world cannot be put outside the calculations of humanity; He has been given to mankind that He might either redeem them from their sins, or send them to perdition for their impenitence. He will save all those who invoke His holy Name, and who mingle repentant tears with the Precious Blood He shed to wipe away their offences; He will condemn all those whom death surprises in the midst of hardened and unrepented sin, and who have profaned the blood which was poured out for their redemption. O my soul, abuse not the blood of Jesus Christ! It has flowed upon me in the Sacraments, and I must reverently approach them with true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. Then I can put my whole trust in God, and I need not despair, however many and great have been my sins.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER WHICH RELIES ON THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

PRAYER in the Name of Jesus Christ is all-powerful. To pray in His Name is to say to the Eternal Father, "My God, it is not I who pray to You, but Your own Son, and He has promised that nothing I ask in His Name will be refused me" (John xvi. 23). You will not make His promise void. What I ask of You has been bought at a great price; and I only beg for what my Saviour has obtained for me already. My own unworthiness can have no claim on You; but He, praying in me, deserves to be heard, and to receive the reward which cost Him so dear.

II.

We should not pray to God for anything unworthy of His dignity, or disproportionate to the merits of His Son. We should lift our thoughts above worldly desires; Our Lord did not die to procure us earthly delights. Let us ask of God to

give us Himself, and grace to enter into His glory and happiness. Let us leave the pleasures of this world to those who have no hope beyond it; but we whom Jesus Christ has redeemed and made inheritors of His Kingdom, should put our trust in His merits, and pray for the coming of that Kingdom, that we may reach the place He has prepared for us there.

III.

When we turn to God and make our humble petitions to Him, in the Name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, we are asking for both pardon and justice; for pardon because we are miserable sinners, and for justice because Jesus Christ has atoned for us; and as members of His body we claim the right to be heard as He would be. In our petitions we should perpetually plead to our Heavenly Father through the merits of His Son, and remind Him of the promises He made to Our Lord; and God, Who is infinitely rich in mercy and goodness, will give a generous answer to such prayers. He will pay to the full all Our Lord asks for us. We may set limits to our demands, but never to our trust and confidence in God. Unhappy prisoners make sure of their reprieve when they know that the King's Son is pleading for them to be forgiven.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

DISPOSITIONS OF A SOUL UNITED IN THE HOUR OF DEATH WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

GUIDE me, O my Saviour, Divine Spouse of my soul, to the place of Your rest, that in my sore distress I may rest in Your arms beneath the shadow of the Cross! Would I could hide in Your wounds, and find therein the remedy for all my woes, and feel the power of Your blood and of Your merits! O my soul, lament no more, take refuge in the Heart of Jesus, for whoso clings to Him shall never perish. He has taken into His keeping all those who trust in Him, and He tells us Himself that "no man shall pluck them out of My hand" (John x. 28). In vain does the Enemy of Souls beg for the sentence to be passed on me, which I have but too well deserved. So long as I cling to the Cross of my Saviour with all my sins and sorrows, I can only be condemned by Jesus Christ, and He has pledged Himself as surety for me.

II.

O Jesus, You are indeed my Saviour! Your Cross gives value to my repentance, and Your sufferings sanctify mine. How sweet it is to suffer with You, and to die in Your arms! Would I could see You now with my bodily eyesight, and contemplate my Saviour, Source of Salvation and Life! O my Saviour, if You will not appear to me save in the splendours of Your glory, give me at least a lively faith. Let me not be as the unbelievers, who have no part in Your merits, who suffer without consolation, and who die without hope.

III.

O my loving Saviour, You have taken all my debts upon You, You have suffered what I should have endured, and by Your stripes I am healed (Isa. liii. 5). Your death has given me life, instead of the everlasting torment which I should have had to bear; I need but cling to Your Cross by faith, to drink Your Precious Blood in the Sacraments, to implore You to apply to me the merits of Your wounds and Your pangs and offer them to the Divine Justice in atonement for my sins, and all my sins will be wiped out. God's anger will be turned aside, my

sentence will be annulled, and all my trespasses forgiven. If I fall again, You will atone again; if I have been weak and wicked enough to deserve eternal punishment a thousand times over, You will not despise "a humble and contrite heart" (Ps. l. 19). What consolation and happiness for the greatest of sinners to know this! His heart is no longer oppressed, and joy floods his inmost soul.

IV.

What comfort for the penitent sinner to know that the Incarnate God is his Saviour, his Mediator, and his Judge! O Jesus, You will not condemn the wretched slave You have redeemed with Your Precious Blood, You will not slaughter the lost sheep You Yourself have rescued from the jaws of the wolf, the lamb You restored to life and fed with Your Sacred Flesh and Blood. You will not lose the fruit of all the suffering which You willed to bear for the salvation of sinners. It was for them, and them alone, You became Incarnate, and consented to be treated as the most abject of mankind; for them You died upon the Cross. You have nailed to Your Cross all the sins of penitent sinners, You have expiated them and washed them all away. Would I might throw myself at Your Feet, kissing Your wounds and crying to You with all my trust

and love, "Forgive me all the pangs You suffered for my sake; forgive me for Your death, and by Your pardon suffer it to profit me, and be for me the price and pledge of eternal life."

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

REASONS AGAINST DESPAIR AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

I.

THE Enemy of Souls tries constantly throughout our lives to bring about our ruin by encouraging us to presume unduly on the Divine Mercy, and in the hour of our death assails us with temptations to despair at the thought of the enormity and number of our sins. When he puts such thoughts before us, we should answer boldly that our sins, however many and however heinous, serve to show forth the Divine Mercy and power of our Saviour's Cross, which are even more manifest in the sanctification of the penitent sinner than in the soul of the Christian who has never fallen. Jesus Christ tells us Himself that He "came not to call the just but the sinner to penance" (Luke v. 32). He is "the Lamb of God . . . who taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). However terrible may be the sins I have committed, His Precious Blood is all-powerful to wash them away and sanctify me.

II.

If there had been no sinners on earth to convert, and no sins to expiate, the efficacy of Our Saviour's Passion would have been, so to speak, dimmed, and the price of His Atonement lessened. The greater the sinner, the more his repentance glorifies Our Lord. The fame of a physician does not rest on the good advice he gives to his healthy patients, but on the cure of the most desperate and hopeless diseases. Jesus Christ is the Physician of my soul. The more diseased I am, the more pains He takes to cure me, and the more He offers to anoint me with the balm of His Precious Blood. With such a physician, I can only be lost if I fail to have recourse to Him, and show Him my shameful wounds; or if I do not put my whole trust in Him.

III.

To whom did Our Saviour show the most favour while He was on earth? To the greatest of sinners. He went to meet them halfway, He sought them out, He sat at meat with them, He showed them so much indulgence and kindness that "the Pharisees seeing it, said to His disciples, Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. ix. 11). He speaks of

Himself under the symbols of the Good Shepherd who leaves the rest of his flock to seek the lost sheep, the compassionate father who kills the fatted calf for the return of the Prodigal Son (Luke xv.), and the Physician who came to heal not the whole but the sick. Not content with receiving sinners indulgently, He urges them to come to Him. "Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). O my soul, the Heart of Jesus has not changed towards us! He still feels the same compassion and mercy towards sinners, the same longing for their salvation; and His blood which was shed for the remission of sin, has lost nothing of its price and power.

IV.

When the woman taken in adultery was brought before Our Saviour, should we not have thought He would condemn her to the utmost rigour of the Mosaic law? Yet He rescues her from her accusers and consoles her; as no man there dare condemn her, He will not be the first; He gently bids her leave His presence to "go and sin no more" (John viii. 3-11). He did not shrink from seeing a woman of the streets at His feet, anointing and bathing them with her tears. He took up her defence against His cap-

tious critics, and foretold how the Gospel would spread abroad the fame of her conversion as long as the world should last (Mark xiv. 3-9). Let us follow her example, and weep for our sins with loving contrition; and be they as scandalous as hers, or even worse, we shall be forgiven.

V.

Can I doubt Christ's willingness to forgive even the most grievous sins, when I remember that He gave Saint Peter and all the ministers of His Church the power to remit every kind of sin with no exception whatever? Unspeakable mercy! God sends me to His Son to be forgiven, and Our Lord sends me to men as weak and sinful as myself. O my God, You could not have made my path more smooth! If I am lost, will it not be my own fault? In vain do the reprobate suffer the dreadful torments of Hell, in vain do they wail and lament; the undying fire will never burn out the stain of their offences, yet if we repent while we are still on earth, it needs but the word of a man to efface all our sins, to quench the flames of Hell through the merits of Our Saviour, and to wash us clean in His Precious Blood. O my Jesus, if the conversion of sinners adds to Your glory, You will indeed be glorified through me. I lay at the

foot of the Cross a life stained with many, many sins. You are the Saviour of sinners, then be mine; and may the salvation of my sinful soul add to Your glory and the triumph of the Cross, that treasure-house of spoils ravished from Hell.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION, AND LAST.

JESUS CHRIST LONGS TO SAVE US.

I.

We are members and children of Jesus Christ. He loves us as a part of Himself, He dreads to lose us as we should dread to lose a limb. Our loss is His; if we perish, a part of His body is lost. He says of Himself, "How often would I have gathered together Thy children, as the hen doth gather the chickens under her wing, and thou wouldst not" (Matt. xxiii. 37). He longs to give us life; He covers us with His wings to warm and shelter us from the dangers which threaten us. Let us fly to Him if we have gone astray. So long as He protects us and keeps us within the shadow of the Cross, we have nothing to fear; no enemy can take us from His loving care.

II.

"If any man sin," says Saint John, instead of losing hope, let him remember that "we have an Advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ, the Just," Who having no need to take pardon for Himself, pleads for the forgiveness of sinful men. He is not only our Advocate and Mediator, He is the Victim immolated for us, " He is the propitiation for our sins . . . and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world " (1 John ii. 12). In pleading for us, He pleads that He may be glorified, and that the shedding of His blood may avail for our salvation; in asking that we may be forgiven, He claims our pardon as His due. To soften the Heart of His Father, He speaks with five eloquent tongues—the wounds with which He was pierced for us. He pleads His death when He asks that we may live, and He prays for Himself, while interceding for us. Shall He not be heard? " O Father," He said, before His death, save those " whom Thou hast given Me . . . Thine they were," and I am going to die for them (John xvii. 6, 11). Let Me not be deprived of the fruit of My sufferings, of My blood-shedding, and of My death, by knowing they are lost.

III.

If any man realizes the extent of Our Saviour's love for us, can he fail to approach Our Lord's judgment seat with confidence? If we had to choose our Judge, whom could we choose, save Jesus, the Saviour of our

souls, to Whom our salvation is as dear as to ourselves? What more could any culprit hope for than to have his advocate and mediator as his judge? And if, in addition, this advocate had already paid his debts, made reparation for his misdoings, and borne the penalty of all his crimes, could the culprit really fear condemnation? "Let us go therefore with confidence," says Saint Paul, "to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16). Jesus Christ has promised that He will not turn away anyone who has recourse to Him. He did not even repulse Judas when he betrayed Him with a kiss; can He refuse to hear those who kneel in love and sincerity at His feet, and with humble and contrite hearts beg for the kiss of peace? He received a monster, sent Him by the Devil, with the tender name of friend; will He not receive those whom the Holy Ghost sends full of vivid faith, steadfast hope, and burning love?

ASPIRATIONS OF THE SOUL TOWARDS GOD, AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

FIRST ASPIRATION.

OF HOPE IN GOD THE FATHER AT THE THOUGHT OF A HAPPY ETERNITY.

I.

OPEN, ye heavenly gates, to receive my soul into the abode of glory! Holy angels, receive my soul, and bring me to the presence of God the Father, in Whose likeness I was created, and to Jesus my Saviour, Who has redeemed and beautified me with His Precious Blood. Receive me, O my Eternal Father and my God! My heart tells me I was made for You alone; You are my Principle and my Last End, and after spending far from You a miserable life in a strange land, I am at last about to return to Your bosom, as a river is merged into the sea. Alas! my heart has always been restless while I was separated from You; You only, O my God, can give me happiness. I sigh

but for You, I have no hope but in You. My only consolation in tribulation is that we are about to be united for ever, and the child will be no longer parted from his Father.

II.

Dear Lord, how fair and spacious are Your mansions! What can earth offer to compare with the marvellous palace in which You reign amidst the saints! My heart is full of joy at the hope of entering soon into the glory and the joy of my Lord. I should have feared to be rejected, did I not know that You delight to people Your dwelling-place with the poor and humble. What man may count the repentant sinners who inhabit there, and who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb? O my God, You chose me out of thousands to become a member of the Body of Your Son, He made me Your child by baptism in His blood; at this hour He is purifying me more and more, He wills that His Flesh and Blood shall be my Viaticum, to make me worthy to appear before You. O my God, You will not reject a soul so dear to Your Son.

SECOND ASPIRATION.

OF HOPE TOWARDS THE HOLY GHOST, IN EXPECTATION OF PARADISE.

I.

Give ear to me, Holy Spirit, Comforter of the afflicted, sweet refreshment in our weariness, consoler of our afflictions, light in darkness! Beloved Guest of our souls, it is You Who dry our tears, and turn to joy those we shed in penitence or love. You are our powerful Intercessor, "the Spirit Himself" Who "asketh for us, with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26). I hear a Divine Voice in my heart telling me I am soon to have the joy of beholding and rejoicing in You, O Love and Joy of the Father and the Son!

II.

O Holy Spirit, if it be true, as Saint Paul says of all the children of God, that "the Spirit of God dwelleth in" me (1 Cor. iii. 16), and I already have a share in Your love and am Your Temple, may I not hope that soon I shall inhabit Your holy dwelling-place? If You are already in my heart, and the grace of Jesus Christ has made You Master of my soul, may I not believe that soon I shall have a share in all Your treasures?

If You have imprinted on my soul the sacred character of a child of God, who shall deny me my heritage? Is it not in the order of grace, as well as of nature, that children shall inherit from their fathers? Complete Your work, O Blessed Spirit, sanctifier of our souls; cleanse me yet more from my sins, make me worthy of Your love, and sanctify the tears You have caused me to shed over all the misdeeds of my life. May the fire of Your love consume all of earth that yet clings to me, freed from the bonds of my captivity, my soul will fly to Your bosom, to joy and eternal rest!

THIRD ASPIRATION.

OF LOVE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH, AND ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY.

I.

O Jesus, my Saviour, in my extremity I come to You and invoke Your holy Name! Open to me the arms You stretch out upon the Cross for the salvation of sinners! Open to me Your pierced side, fountain of salvation for sinners! Open to me Your wounds, wherein my name is graven! O my sole hope, my last hour draws nigh; now comes the hour when You will take possession of the soul which has cost You so dear!

II.

I cannot deny my ingratitude, but You have seen my repentance and my sorrow, for You inspired both. You know the world is dead to me, all my love and hope are set on You; in Your hands are the remnant of my life and my approaching death. O life of my soul, all things have departed from me now, save the thought that my soul is about to be delivered from this mortal body, and be united to You, to repose eternally in Your wounded side.

III.

O God of infinite majesty, You deigned to visit us on earth and enter into our tabernacles of clay; dare I not hope that You will receive me into the heavenly courts? Is it not more wonderful to think that You condescended to come down to us poor sinners, than that I should rise to You? Soon I shall see my Saviour. He is my Master; I am about to be reunited to Him for ever. O death, you bring me life! O Jesus, sweet is death for those who hope to live again with You!

IV.

O Our Father, what would it be to be without Your children! "I go," You said to Your Apostles, "to prepare a place

for you" (John xiv. 2). You have prepared mine, O my Saviour, and kept it for me, and soon I shall be there. You have promised that those Your Father gave You should be with You where You are (John xvii. 24). You have promised those who have eaten of Your Flesh and drunk Your Blood that, after feeding them on earth, You would take them to live with You in Heaven (John vi. 59). O my soul, he who lives and feeds upon the Bread which came from Heaven may well hope to live there for ever with his God.

V.

You died for me, O my Saviour, while I was yet Your enemy. You would not refuse me eternal life now that all my love and my hopes are centred on You? Though the happiness of Heaven be above my deserts, and my sins have made me unworthy of it, it is not beyond You; You have earned it for me, and shed Your Precious Blood that I might attain to it. O my Jesus, I look for a place in Heaven as a favour I have not deserved, but also as a crown of justice which You have laid up for me. O my most loving Saviour, the hour is come when I may claim the reward of all Your labours, all Your tears, Your prayers, Your sufferings, and Your death. It is mine, bequeathed me with Your dying breath. By virtue of

my union with You, by all the Sacraments which have strengthened and sanctified me, and by the unction of Your love, I claim Your promise of Heaven. I ask eternal life of God the Father in Your Name, as Your brother and co-heir. O blessed tidings! I am to "go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1). I shall enter it with Jesus Christ, as one of His brethren, to share the happiness and joy of His Father and mine.

VI.

My soul is overcome with ecstasy at the summons to be for ever with Jesus Christ. How sweet to die in such a hope! O death, you are the beginning of my life. Come, O my Saviour, receive my soul, which is about to burst her bonds; come and meet me as I leave the gates of my prison, where I have suffered so long! Come, O my only hope, my refuge and my salvation, come and hide me for ever in Your heart!

FOURTH ASPIRATION.

DEVOUT MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

I.

O Jesus, that my dying pangs might be soothed You willed to suffer mortal agony! Now is my soul sorrowful unto death. O

my Saviour, may the sorrows of Your Agony sanctify my sufferings! May the Bloody Sweat which came from Your Adorable Body sanctify the sweat of death which now breaks out upon my failing limbs! Strengthen and comfort me in my agony, as You were strengthened and comforted by an angel! If it be possible, send me a quick and holy death to put an end to all the ills which burden me; but no! "Not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42).

II.

O my Saviour and my Master, Redeemer of the greatest sinners, You received with meekness the kiss of the traitor Judas; You called him friend in the hour of Your betrayal, You converted with a look the cowardly Apostle who denied You, You asked God to forgive the Jews while they were crucifying You and adding insult and blasphemy to their cruelties. Forgive me, O Jesus, as You did them; for as Judas, I have sinned in malice, with Saint Peter, I have failed You out of cowardice, in my ignorance I have been no better than the Jews. But You are still unchanged; You are still the Saviour of the world, the Friend of sinners, "the Lamb of God . . . Who taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). Give me, O my Saviour, the kiss of peace which Judas

profaned, look upon me with the gaze which converted Saint Peter, grant me the forgiveness You asked for Your executioners.

III.

Lord Jesus, go not far from me: I am in the furnace of tribulation, and You alone can save me. Remember what You suffered for my redemption. In this hour, when my eternal destiny hangs in the balance, apply to my soul the saving merits of the blood You shed for me, and wipe out all my past sins which I utterly renounce. May the humiliations and insults You bore on earth atone for my inordinate pride, may Your wounds and stripes heal the offences I have committed through the flesh, may Your obedience on the Cross expiate my disobedience and my rebellious spirit. O Jesus, I am a repentant sinner, and my soul is about to appear before You; let me hear the words You spoke to the penitent thief hanging beside You, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 48). O my Saviour, hide me in Your wounds, protect and shelter me! Suffer me to breathe my last sigh within the haven of Your heart, that there I may commit into Your hands the sacred deposit of God, the soul You have redeemed with Your blood, nourished with Your flesh, sanctified and called to live with You in Heaven.

IV.

O Jesus, inspire my departing soul with the same thoughts You had at the hour of death. I forgive, as You did, all the enemies I may have made during the course of my life; I turn to Mary, whom You gave me as my Mother. O Mary, Mother of my Redeemer, dearest Mother, your child lies at the point of death; abandon not my soul, help me to die. Remember the words which Jesus spoke to you from the Cross: "Woman, behold thy son" (John xix. 26). Show yourself a Mother to me in this hour, close the eyes of your dying child, and receive his last sigh. O Jesus, grant me to die in Your arms, as did Saint Joseph. Grant that my last words may be the same as Yours: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). Grant that before I die I may invoke the Sacred Names in which I put my whole trust: Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

DEVOTIONS

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METHOD OF ASSISTING AT HOLY MASS.

PIUS VII. granted 100 days' indulgence to all who use this method in following the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The method of hearing Mass most in conformity with the spirit of the Church is to unite our prayers and thoughts with those of the priest. If you would unite yourself in spirit with the priest at the altar, you must bear in mind the four objects of the Sacrifice of the Mass. These are:

1. To render to God the praise and adoration which are His due,

2. To satisfy for all our sins,

3. To thank Him for all His benefits to us, and

4. To ask Him for all those graces of which we stand in need.

If you are about to hear Holy Mass in accordance with this method, you should divide it into four parts. During the first part, from the beginning to the Gospel, adore and praise the Divine Majesty; during the second, from the Gospel to the Eleva-

tion, ask pardon for your sins; during the third, from the Elevation to the Communion, thank God for the graces He has given you; and during the fourth, from the Communion to the end, make at least a Spiritual Communion, and ask the God of all Goodness, Who has given Himself to you, to send you the graces you need.

PART I.

FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE GOSPEL.

Humiliate yourself with Jesus Christ; bow down in body as well as in soul—for we should always assist at Mass in the most respectful and modest posture possible—and say:

My God, I adore You and acknowledge You to be the Lord and Master of my soul. All that I am, and all that I possess, I have received from You; but as Your Sovereign Majesty deserves and exacts an infinite homage, and I am but a poor beggar, utterly unable to pay so great a debt, I offer You the humiliations and the homage of Jesus on the Altar. I wish to imitate Him. With Him I humbly bow before Your Supreme Majesty. O my God, I rejoice exceedingly in the infinite honour which this Holy Sacrifice procures You; it gives me inexpressible happiness and satisfaction.

Encourage these thoughts in your heart, and without confining yourself to the mere words which express them; rejoice at seeing the Divine Majesty worthily praised and worshipped by the praise and adoration of Jesus, Who has vouchsafed to supply all your deficiencies.

PART II.

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE ELEVATION.

Look back upon your sins, and, seeing the immense debt you owe the Divine Justice, say, with deep humility:

Behold, O my God, the traitor who has so often rebelled against You. Alas! I am filled with regret; I abhor and detest with all my heart my innumerable sins. I offer You in expiation the same satisfaction which Jesus Christ offers on the Altar; His merits, His blood, and Himself, God Incarnate, Who, as Victim, deigns once more to renew His Sacrifice for my sake. As my Jesus is Himself my Mediator and Advocate on the Altar, and is asking You to have mercy on me through His precious blood, I join my voice to His adorable pleading, and ask Your forgiveness for the enormity of my sins. O God of my heart, if my tears do not touch You, listen to the groanings of Jesus, and as He obtained mercy on the

Cross for the whole world, may He obtain it for me on the Altar! I humbly trust that through the merits of His Precious Blood You will forgive me all my sins, which I shall bewail to my last breath. My belovéd Jesus, give me the tears of Saint Peter, the contrition of Magdalen, and the sorrow of all the saints, who from sinners became true penitents, that I may obtain complete forgiveness of my sins through this Holy Sacrifice.

Repeat these acts, while endeavouring to keep yourself in the presence of God. Be sure that in this manner you can fully repay all the debts which, by your sins, you have contracted towards God.

PART III.

FROM THE ELEVATION TO THE COMMUNION.

Reflect on the many and great benefits God has conferred on you; offer Him in exchange the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; and call upon all the angels and saints in Heaven to thank God with you, somewhat after this fashion:

I come before You, O God of my heart, loaded with all the different gifts You have deigned to shower on me, and which You promise to grant me for all eternity. Your mercies towards me have been and are infi-

nite, but I am ready to repay You to the uttermost farthing. I offer You, by the hands of the priest, the Precious Blood and the most Sacred Body of this Divine Victim. Is not this, O Lord God, more than sufficient payment for all the gifts I have received or may receive from Your infinite beneficence? Angels of the Lord, blessed citizens of Heaven, and my holy patrons, help me to thank my God; let us offer Him, in thanksgiving for all the blessings He has poured on me, this Holy Mass, and all those which are being celebrated all over the world, so that I may worthily repay His lovingkindness towards me. Beg the God of Mercy to look favourably upon me, and in consideration of all the love and gratitude which Jesus offers Him from me in this Holy Sacrifice.

Dwell upon these devout thoughts, recall to mind some of the signal benefits you have received from God, try to realize the infinite value of the Atonement on the Cross, and of the Sacrifice of the Mass which is its commemoration, and take comfort in the thought that the offering of this august Victim is a means of expressing all your gratitude to God. Call upon all the inhabitants of Heaven to thank God for and with you.

PART IV.

FROM THE COMMUNION TILL THE END OF MASS.

If you do not communicate sacramentally, at least you should make a Spiritual Communion, which consists in a fervent desire to be fed with this heavenly Bread, a lively faith, and the charity which makes us partakers in the fruits and graces of the Sacrament. Unite yourself to God, cling to Him with all the love of your heart, and ask Him for all the graces you need—or rather, leave Jesus to pray for you. With the deepest humility, yet full of hope and trust, you may use this prayer:

O my God, I acknowledge my utter unworthiness, but You will not refuse to listen to the prayer of Your Divine Son, when He is offering You His Body and His Blood for me! For His sake grant me all the graces which You know I need for the great business of my salvation. Forgive me my sins, and give me the grace of final perseverance. In the Name of Jesus, I ask for all the highest virtues and all the most efficacious aids to becoming a true saint; I ask for the exultation of Holy Church and the conversion of all infidels and sinners, particularly those dearest to me. By the power of this Divine Sacrifice, deliver from the

flames of Purgatory, not one soul, but all the souls which have been detained there until this hour. Convert the souls of the living, that this unhappy world may become a Paradise of delights for Your Majesty, and grant that having loved, praised, blessed, and worshipped You here below, we may praise and glorify You to all eternity. Amen.

Ask these favours confidently; pray for yourself, your neighbours, your friends, and your acquaintances; and above all, pray fervently and with the fullest trust that your prayers, united to those of Jesus, will be granted.

When Mass is over, make a short thanksgiving in these words:

We give You thanks, Omnipotent God, for all Your benefits, Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Leave the church with as contrite a heart as if you were going down from Calvary.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

In accordance with pronouncements made in the Briefs and Bulls of several Popes, the faithful who make the Stations of the Cross in any church, chapel, or oratory, under the required conditions, and where the Stations are erected canonically, can obtain the same indulgences as if they walked in person on the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. These indulgences, plenary and partial, are very numerous, and all are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Conditions for gaining the Indulgences of the Stations of the Cross.

1. Although it is not of obligation to go to Confession and Communion, we must be in a state of grace to gain the indulgences attached to this devotion.

2. When we perform this devout exercise, we must walk past all the Stations, stopping to kneel before each picture. When, however, there is a great crowd of worshippers and the space is too limited to allow of our

passing from one Station to another, it is sufficient to rise from our knees after each Station, and look towards the picture next to us.

3. There is no special formula of prayer for the Stations, but as it is of obligation to meditate devoutly on each of the fourteen Mysteries, either by mental or vocal prayer, the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences advises the faithful to follow the usual custom of reciting at each Station the *Adoramus Te Christe*, and one Our Father, with the *Miserere* and the *Fidelium Animæ*.* In addition to this, some persons may find it helpful to read the reflections which usually accompany these prayers in books intended for such occasions, in order to concentrate their attention, and perform this devout exercise with recollection and piety.

4. For those who cannot make long and detailed meditations, it is sufficient to excite in themselves a great horror of their sins, and to turn their thoughts towards some incident in the Passion of Our Saviour.

5. It is not necessary to go to all fourteen Stations in one visit; this devotion may be divided into two or three visits, provided they all take place on the same day.

6. If the Stations of the Cross are made several times in one day, the indulgences granted are gained each time.

* The *Fidelium Animæ* is not often recited.

Persons desiring further and more detailed information on this Exercise are referred to special works on the subject, or to a Treatise on Indulgences, such as the one by Father Maurel.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

(*From the Italian. Printed in Rome.*)

Begin by an Act of Contrition.

First Station.

Jesus is condemned to death.

We adore Thee, O Jesus, and we bless Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

O my Jesus, by that unjust sentence of death to which Thou didst submit for love of me, and which I have so often renewed by my sins, deliver me from the sentence of everlasting death which I so often have deserved.

Pater, Ave, Gloria.

Lord have mercy on us!

Lord have mercy on us!

May the souls of the faithful by the mercy of God, etc.

In moving from one Station to the next, the *Sancta Mater, istud agas* is sung—

Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

Second Station.

Jesus takes up His Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

O my Jesus, Who didst voluntarily take up a heavy Cross in expiation of my sins, make me to understand their grievousness, that I may bewail them for the rest of my life.

Ejaculations as before.

Third Station.

Jesus falls for the First Time beneath the weight of His Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

The heavy burden of my sins, O my Jesus, caused Thee to fall beneath the Cross. I will always detest them. I abhor them and beg Thy forgiveness more and more. With the assistance of Thy Grace, I purpose to offend no more.

As before.

Fourth Station.

Jesus meets His most holy Mother.

We adore Thee, etc.

O most afflicted Saviour ! O Mary, Mother of Sorrows ! if in the past my sins have been the reason of your sufferings and your

trials, by the help of Divine grace I will amend my life and love you faithfully until death.

As before.

Fifth Station.

Simon the Cyrenean helps Jesus to carry His Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

How happy was the Cyrenean, O my Jesus, to be allowed to help Thee carry Thy Cross! I were happy, too, if I could help Thee carry it, by bearing with patience and resignation whatever crosses Thou sendest me in the course of my life. Grant me this grace, O Jesus!

As before.

Sixth Station.

Saint Veronica wipes the Face of Jesus.

We adore Thee, etc.

My sweetest Jesus, imprint upon my soul, I pray Thee, the memory of Thy cruel sufferings, as Thou didst imprint Thy most Sacred Face upon the napkin which Veronica used to wipe away the blood which covered Thee.

As before.

Seventh Station.

Jesus falls for the Second Time.

We adore Thee, etc.

My repeated falls caused Thee to fall to earth once more, O my Jesus! Grant me the grace to use all the means in my power to prevent myself from relapsing into sin.

As before.

Eighth Station.

Jesus consoles the Women of Jerusalem.

We adore Thee, etc.

O my Jesus, Thou Who in consoling the holy women didst predict the Fall of Jerusalem, temper Thy justice which I have so often provoked, and grant that Thy mercy which I will always try to deserve may be my consolation.

As before.

Ninth Station.

Jesus falls for the Third Time beneath the weight of His Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

O my Jesus, Who didst fall a third time beneath the harsh treatment of Thy enemies, grant me the grace to fall no more into sin. My sweetest Jesus, I will rather die than offend Thee again.

As before.

Tenth Station.

Jesus is stripped of His garments and offered gall to drink.

We adore Thee, etc.

O my Jesus, Who wert stripped of Thy garment and drenched with bitterness, strip me of all attachment to the things of this world, and make me turn from all which savours of the world and of sin.

As before.

Eleventh Station.

Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

By the cruel pangs Thou didst suffer, O my Jesus, when Thou wert fastened to the Cross with heavy nails which pierced Thy hands and Thy feet, give me grace to crucify my flesh with all its lusts.

As before.

Twelfth Station.

Jesus dies on the Cross.

We adore Thee, etc.

O my Jesus, Who didst hang upon the Tree of the Cross, and didst expire thereon after three hours of cruellest agony, oh, teach me to imitate Thee by the exercise

of every virtue, and help me to die to all things which pertain to this miserable world.

As before.

Thirteenth Station.

Jesus is taken down from the Cross and placed in the arms of His most holy Mother.

We adore Thee, etc.

O Mary, most sorrowful Mother, who didst receive your Divine Son Jesus in your arms after His death, obtain for me, I beg of you, true contrition for my sins, and deign to pray for me that whenever Jesus comes into my heart sacramentally I may always receive Him worthily.

As before.

Fourteenth Station.

Jesus is deposited in the Sepulchre.

We adore Thee, etc.

I desire to remain for ever in the Sepulchre with Thee, O my Jesus; or if I live, that I may live for Thee, and deserve to enjoy with Thee in Heaven the fruits of Thy Sacred Death and Passion.

As before, ending with Hail Mary and Lord have mercy.

Prayer

O God, Who didst ordain that the life-giving symbol of the Cross should be sanctified by the Precious Blood of Thy only Son, vouchsafe, we pray Thee, that they who glory in honouring it may always and everywhere be under Thy protection. We ask this grace in the Name of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

A GOOD death brings with it the most precious consolations; it is the end of all our ills, and the beginning of true happiness. Pray often for a good death, and if there is anything which attaches you unduly to this world, and if the fascinations of pleasure hide the truth from you, pray until you learn to judge of things as God sees and judges of them.

Love God and seek Him, set not your hopes on this passing world. Look upon all things mortal as mere superfluities. Keep your heart for those affections only which God inspires and sanctifies. Then He will prepare you for your last solemn journey, He will come Himself with His Angels and with Mary His Mother to receive and bless you; He will shower blessings upon you, and give you a crown in Heaven.

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Retire to some quiet spot, and there, forgetting all creatures, kneel before your crucifix, and make the following Meditation:

Imagine yourself at the hour of death, and that your good Angel is come to tell you, as the prophet told Ezechiel, that you must put your house in order and prepare to die. Do not fear to familiarize yourself with the thought of death; the more you think of it, the less terror it will have for you. Far from dreading the idea, you should try to fix it firmly in your mind and say to yourself, I have to die.

What is Death?

I shall die—that is to say, I shall leave everything and everybody, relations, friends, children, and bid them an eternal farewell. I shall leave my house, my furniture, my estate, everything belonging to me, absolutely everything. Even the things I value most I must leave behind for ever. Is my soul overcome with dread at the idea of being stripped of all? Yet it has to be, and it is folly to cling to what passes so quickly. . . . I have taken great trouble to acquire what I possess, and I must leave it all. . . .

I shall die—that is to say, my soul will leave my body, which will then become a superfluous object that even my relatives and friends will hasten to put out of their way. It will be buried in the ground. . . . What will become of this body which means so much to me? What will become of my feet, my hands, my head? Fool that I

am to cherish that which so soon will be but dust and corruption, and to risk my soul and my eternity for such a thing! Will men remember me for long! Alas, the dead are soon forgotten. . . . Who remembers such and such a one, who has passed away? The esteem of men is but of little account.

I shall die—that is to say, my soul will appear before the Judgment Seat of God! What a moment! . . . Alone in the presence of God! . . . Questioned on my whole life by a God of infinite wisdom and justice, mercilessly opposed to sin!

When and how shall I die?

How long have I still to live? I cannot tell: men die at all ages. Shall I have time to prepare for death? I cannot tell: I know that many people, even after a long illness, die at the moment they least expect it. Shall I be able to receive the Last Sacraments, or shall I die unabsolved? I cannot tell: I may suddenly lose the power of speech. Besides, when one is very ill, one is not fit for much. . . . What madness to leave everything to the last moment, when it is a question of our eternal destiny!

Am I fit to die?

If I had to die at this moment, should I be prepared? Am I ready to give up every-

thing? . . . Above all, am I fit to appear before the Judgment Seat of God? . . . Is there nothing that troubles me? Is my conscience perfectly clear? Do I feel no anxiety at all about past Confessions and Communions, or about the way I have fulfilled the duties of my station of life?

What imprudence to be so little prepared for death! If I knew I were about to die at once, how should I wish to have lived? . . . How should I wish I had behaved under such and such circumstances?

O my soul, let us listen to the warnings of Death, and not to idle sophistries!

After you have dwelt as long as possible on these helpful thoughts, and made whatever resolutions they have inspired you with, recite devoutly the two following prayers, with your Crucifix in your hand:

Act of Resignation to Death.

(*To be made after meditating as above.*)

O God, Sovereign Lord of life and death, Who by an immutable decree, and to punish sin, has ordained that all men must die, I humbly kneel before You in submission and resignation to this just law. In bitterness of soul I deplore all the sins I have committed. Rebellious and sinful, I have deserved death

a thousand times, and I accept it in expiation of my many shortcomings; I accept it in obedience to Your adorable will, and in union with the death of my Saviour. May I die then, O my God, where, when, and how it shall please You. . . . I will employ whatever space of time Your mercy may vouchsafe to me, in detaching myself from a world where I have but a few brief moments to stay, in breaking whatever ties still bind me to this land of exile, and in preparing my soul for Your dread Judgment. . . . I give myself without reserve to the care of Your Fatherly Providence. May Your will be done in all things, and for ever. Amen.

Prayer for the Grace of a good Death.

Prostrate before the throne of Your adorable Majesty, I come, O my God, to pray for the last grace of all, a good death. Though I have made bad use of the life You gave me, grant that I may end it well, and die in Your love.

May I die as did the holy patriarchs, leaving this vale of tears without regret, to enjoy eternal rest in my true home !

May I die as blessed Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, repeating the two sweet Names I hope to bless for all eternity !

May I die as Jesus on the Cross, resigned to my sufferings with a real hatred of sin and a real love for my Heavenly Father!

Holy Father, I commit my soul into Your hands, have mercy on me! Jesus Who died for love of me, grant me the grace to die in Your love! Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me, a poor sinner, now and at the hour of my death! Angel of Heaven, faithful guardian of my soul, great Saints whom God has given me as my protectors, abandon me not at the hour of death. Saint Joseph, intercede for me, that I may die the death of the just. Amen.

A Shorter Method of Preparation for Death.

Which may be used every night before retiring to rest.

1. My heart is ready, my God. "Thy Will, not mine, be done." I abandon myself entirely to receive death when and how it may please Thee to send it.

2. I humbly ask pardon for all the sins I have committed against The Sovereign Goodness, and I repent of them with all my heart.

3. I believe sincerely all that Holy Church teaches, and in that faith I hope to die.

4. I look for the life everlasting, through Your mercy, and through the merits of Jesus Christ.

5. O God, I wish to love You above all things and disdaining all else, as my Sovereign Good; and my neighbour as myself, forgiving him with all my heart.

6. O my Divine Jesus, I have a great longing to receive Your Sacred Body; and in order to feed upon It spiritually, I unite myself to all the Communions which may be made in Holy Church until the end of the world, and especially at the hour of my death.

7. Vouchsafe, O my Divine Saviour, to wipe out all the sins I have committed in the flesh, through the merits of Your Precious Blood.

8. Holy Virgin, Mother of my God, defend me against my enemies, and bring me to your Divine Son.

9. Great Saint Michael, my holy guardian Angel, and my holy Protectors, pray for me, and assist me in my last agony.

10. O my God, I renounce the temptations of the Enemy, and everything displeasing to You; I adore and submit to all Your judgments concerning my soul, as perfectly just and lawful; and I abandon myself to You with absolute submission.

11. O Jesus, my Divine Jesus, *esto mihi*

Jesu! O my God, I hide myself in all humility and trust within Your Sacred Wounds; I commit my soul into Your Divine hands; receive it into the bosom of Your mercy. Amen.

INVOCATIONS TO JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give You my heart, my soul, and my life.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I die in peace in Your holy company.

By a Decree of April 28, 1807, Pius VII. grants 200 days' indulgence to all who devoutly and with contrite heart make these three invocations. The same Pope grants 100 days' indulgence to those who make one invocation only. Both these are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

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